

THE BULL OF THE KRAAL



DUDLEY KIDD



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**THE
BULL OF THE KRAAL
AND THE
HEAVENLY MAIDENS**

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

SOUTH AFRICA

PEEPS AT MANY LANDS SERIES

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A TALE OF BLACK CHILDREN

**THE BULL OF THE
KRAAL
AND
THE HEAVENLY MAIDENS**

BY
DUDLEY KIDD

AUTHOR OF "THE ESSENTIAL KAFFIR"
"SAVAGE CHILDHOOD" ETC.

*NEW EDITION
CONTAINING EIGHT FULL-PAGE
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By AGNES M. GOODALL

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THE BULL OF THE KRAAL

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCING THE BULL OF THE KRAAL

ON dismounting from my Basuto pony at the Chief's kraal—commonly called the Great Place—where I was to spend a week, I heard the most tremendous roaring going on inside the largest hut. As the Chief's eldest son, a fine-looking man about thirty-five years of age, came up courteously to greet me, I asked whatever the hubbub was all about.

“Oh!” said he, smiling, “it's only little Mahleka who is in trouble.”

“Laughter?” said I, “is that what you call him? Indeed, I think his name should be ‘Roaring,’ and not ‘Laughter,’ for he bellows like an angry bull.”

“And you are not far wrong,” said the man, “in talking about a bull; for Mahleka is our Bull of the Kraal, and if he may not roar then I wonder who may?”

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"Oh!" said I, "so he is the Bull of the Kraal, is he? That alters matters. I have heard he is a jolly little fellow."

"Come in and see for yourself," said he, leading me to the hut.

I bent down on my hands and knees to crawl through the low doorway, which was only eighteen inches high, and as I was struggling through the opening the roaring suddenly ceased, and gave place to laughter. As soon as my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness and smoke—for the hut had neither windows nor chimney—I saw the cause of all the noise.

Mahleka, a chubby black boy about seven years old, stood in the middle of the hut. There were tears still on his cheeks; in his hand he held a huge bone, from which he was tearing off the meat with his teeth. He was clad in the *umutsha*—a little bundle of strips of ox-hide fastened round the waist. The only other clothing he had was a turquoise-blue bead necklace. The women and children were sitting on the ground enjoying their food, and several very lean mongrels were prowling round a snarling dog that was ravenously devouring a bone. A few minutes before Mahleka had been holding that bone in his hands, and had paused in

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the midst of his evening meal to pester his mother with questions.

Before Mahleka knew what was happening, the dog, seeing the boy occupied, crept up behind him stealthily and seized hold of the bone. A tremendous fight ensued, for the sturdy child did not see the joke of being robbed of his meat. Mahleka shouted and scolded, and at the same time pulled as hard as he could; but the bone began to slip through his greasy fingers. The dog, realising its advantage, gave a furious tug at the bone, which slipped from the grasp of the small boy, who fell back head-over-heels into his mother's lap. His roars were drowned in the burst of merriment that arose from all the people in the hut, for they thought that a child should at least be able to guard its food from being stolen by a dog. Mahleka opened his mouth wide and howled in a woebegone and piteous fashion, for he wanted to win sympathy for his loss. He received nothing but laughter in return, even his mother chiding him for being overcome by a dog. "You see," said she, "what comes of asking questions." The child saw he could melt no hearts by his tears, and had at least the smartness to make up for his loss. Seeing everybody shaking with laughter, he ran to the grass mat on

which the rest of the meat was lying, picked up an enormous bone, and began to gnaw at the meat before any one could interfere—a piece of cleverness that was applauded by all.

It was at this point I entered the hut. After greeting the grown-up people, I held out my hand to the boy. He looked very alarmed, and shrank back to his mother, hiding his face in her blanket, for I was the first white man he had ever seen.

“Come, don’t be shy,” said the mother; “give the white man your hand to shake.”

Mahleka looked at my face and then at my hand, and, turning to his mother, said, “Won’t the white come off?”

“No, you little baboon,” said she. “Just try and see.”

He then shook hands with me, touching me with but the tips of his fingers. When he withdrew his hand he looked first at his fingers and then up at me. He touched my hand again to make quite sure the white would not come off, and then turned round and, looking up at his mother, said in a very loud whisper, “I want to know, is he white all over?” Through the burst of laughter that greeted this question I fancy I heard him add,

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“And does it come off when he washes? I want to know.”

I must now explain who Mahleka was, and why he was called the Bull of the Kraal. His father, being an important black Chief, had, of course, married a number of women before he took his Great Wife, who was the wife of his heart. Mahleka, being the eldest son of this Great Wife, was the heir to the chieftainship, and naturally took precedence of all his elder brothers. As he was a sort of black Prince of Wales, he was called the Bull of the Kraal—that is to say, Cock of the Walk. There was great rejoicing when he was born, and the Chief was so glad to have an heir that he said to all the people who came to congratulate him: “Eh! but my heart is full of laughter to-day; the boy shall be called Mahleka.”

I wished to find out how many brothers and sisters Mahleka had, and so as we were sitting round the wood fire on which our supper was being cooked, I asked the Chief the number of his children. The old man laughed and said, “Oh, I have got a great many; I could never count them all.” However, I pressed him to make the attempt. He grew very merry, and said: “You white men

are very queer people, and ask all sorts of strange questions. Whoever heard of a chief who knew how many children he had?" He chuckled immensely at the idea of counting his children, but told Mahleka's mother to help him. Not being able to read or write, he made a small son stand up, and told him to bend one finger for every person named. He then mentioned his different wives one after the other, while the people in the hut called out the names of the children of each wife. They soon used up all the fingers of the first boy, and called up a second. Child after child was pressed into service, until the eighth was told to come to the front. He bent finger after finger, till only three were left. Then some one mentioned the name of a brother who was dead. The old Chief evidently had never heard the poem "We are Seven," but remarked that there were quite enough children alive, without counting those that were dead. When the people had named all the sons and daughters, they set to work to count the fingers that had been bent, and amidst a roar of laughter announced that the number was not seven, but seventy-seven. Mahleka, therefore, has seventy-six brothers and sisters! If you would know how many cousins and uncles and aunts he

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has, you must go out to South Africa and count for yourself.

As a rule a small Bull of the Kraal has a very good time, for every one pets him and tries to keep in his good books: no one cares to cross the will of such an important person, lest the offence should be remembered when the child grows up and becomes the Chief. But in the case of Mahleka there were also other reasons why nobody scolded or teased him. He was nearly always laughing, and was such a jolly, sturdy boy, and had so many funny ways, that no one could help loving him. His skin was just the colour of chocolate; and though his nose was very flat and his lips very broad, yet he looked so delicious, and soft, and plump that any person fond of chocolate children would have loved to cuddle, and kiss, and eat the little man. He was as merry as a sand-boy, and had the funniest habit of cuddling up to people so that he might have his silky skin stroked. White girls would just go mad over him—when washed and clean—and would be sure to say laughingly, “Oh, but isn’t he a little dear?” He had never seen a coat, or waistcoat, or pair of trousers in his life; but he loved to run off with a small piece of one of his mother’s blankets, and imagined himself

ever so grand as he strutted about before his admirers showing himself off in his "nice new blanket."

The kraal in which the Bull lived was a cluster of huts arranged in a circle; viewed from a distance it looked like a large fairy ring such as you may see any day on the Downs, and was made up of a couple of dozen huts that looked like enormous bee-hives. In the centre of this ring lay the cattle-kraal, a large circular space about thirty yards across, enclosed by a hedge of brushwood. The oxen were shut up in this enclosure at night, and were thus safe from the attacks of wild animals and thieves. The bee-hive huts in which the people lived were made of a basket-work frame of thin sticks, smeared with mud, and covered with a roof of thatching grass neatly bound with a thin rope of twisted reeds or grass. The huts were from twelve to thirty feet across and about seven feet high in the centre. The floors were made of earth stamped down till hard and firm, and in the centre of each floor there was a raised ring of earth which served as a fireplace, within which small logs of wood were kept continually burning. Since there were no windows or chimneys, the pungent smoke of the fire filled the huts, and after

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wandering about for a long time slowly soaked through the roofs as best it might. Whenever I entered one of these huts my eyes smarted and watered in a very unpleasant fashion, but the black people did not seem to suffer at all from the smoke. The grass roofs, which were supported on a number of poles and rafters, had all become jet-black, thus making the huts seem very dark; for light could only enter through small arched doorways, which were so low that even children had to bend down when they wished to enter or leave the huts. Small basket-work hurdles served as doors, which, however, were only used at night; during the day they were placed out of the way against the mud wall. The huts were very snug and cosy, and being well made were quite waterproof.

Each of the Chief's wives had a hut of her own, the Great Wife's hut being bigger and better built than the others. It was the home in which the Bull of the Kraal lived. Several goats, some cats and dogs, a young calf or two, and about a dozen hens regarded themselves as part of the family, shared the hut with the other people, and managed to live together on very good terms.

The people had no beds or mattresses, but slept on thin grass mats which they spread on the mud

floor. The sleepers rested their heads, not on feather bolsters, but on carved blocks of wood which served as pillows. No one slept under more than one blanket, and, indeed, most of the children had no blankets at all, but crept up to some elder person and cuddled up to them for warmth, thinking themselves very well off indeed, for they had never even heard of sheets and nightgowns.

The Chief's hut had very little furniture to speak of, for there were no chairs or tables, no wardrobes or cupboards, no book-cases or pictures, no washing-stands or looking-glasses, no carpets or wall-papers: there were half a dozen rough earthenware pots to hold water or beer, a few calabashes or gourds, some baskets to hold grain, and a leather thong—tied between two of the poles that supported the roof—on which to hang blankets during the day. Several assegais (spears) and hoes were resting against the mud wall, while a number of small articles had been stuck in the thatch, which thus served most handily as a sort of cupboard.

* * * * *

I had arrived at the kraal as the sun was setting, and before long found myself sitting on the floor in the midst of a number of black people, who were feasting on an ox that had been killed in my

INTRODUCING THE BULL OF THE KRAAL 11

honour. The meat was supposed to belong to me, but of course I was expected to share it with everybody in the kraal. There was very little conversation during the meal, as the people who filled the hut—and who for the most part had invited themselves to the feast—were too busy cooking and eating to talk, except to point out to one another the wonderful folding fork and knife which I pulled out of my pocket.

Black people go to bed very early, for they have neither candles nor lamps. After the evening meal we all sat round the fire chatting, the men and big boys on one side of the hut, the women and smaller children on the other. When the men were tired of talking they told the women to make the beds. The big girls fetched out some grass mats, which had been rolled up during the day like so many huge cigarettes, spread them on the floor, and everything was ready for the sleepers.

Sometimes black people tell the children that if they will only tie big iron Kafir pots or wooden milk-pails round their necks when they go to bed, they will find them full of beans or milk in the morning. Before the children awake at dawn the grown-up people put the beans or milk into the vessels; but when a child has been especially

greedy the vessel is left empty. Since Mahleka had taken a bone without being given permission, his father said to him, "I advise you to tie round your neck that big bone you have been gnawing, for then you will find it covered with delicious meat in the morning." Mahleka therefore begged a big sister to help him to fasten the bone round his neck with a piece of grass string. His mother then laid him on his small mat, which was placed beside her own, and, lying down, covered the Bull of the Kraal with a corner of her blanket. Since everybody was preparing to go to sleep, I undid my wraps which had been strapped on to my saddle, and, placing one of my saddle-bags to act as a pillow, lay down on the floor and rolled myself up in my rug. By seven o'clock I was fast asleep.

THE FIRST DAY

CHAPTER II

BIRD-TRAPS

I WOKE at dawn, and could dimly see that the mud floor of the hut was covered by a number of black people wrapped up in coloured blankets. It looked exactly as if some huge, hairy caterpillars had taken possession of the hut. The silence was broken only by the soft breathing of the sleepers, though every now and then a half-stifled voice could be heard coming from under one of the blankets. The sound came from the Bull of the Kraal, who was evidently troubled by evil dreams. He awoke suddenly, sat bolt upright, and felt for the bone that was hanging round his neck. Not finding any meat on it, he shouted out in a very cross tone, "Some one has eaten the meat off my bone ; he must have done it just before I awoke, for there is none on it now, as you said there would be." He grew very angry,

and accused one of his brothers of having stolen the meat in the darkness. But the boy indignantly denied the charge, saying he had been asleep all night, and had only that moment been awakened by Mahleka.

The noise of the quarrel awoke the Chief, who slowly raised his head from his wooden pillow and peered into the darkness.

"Eh ! and what's all this noise about ?" said he, laughing. "You don't mean to say that there is no meat on your bone, do you ?"

"Some one must have stolen it," roared the Bull of the Kraal ; "there isn't any meat on it at all."

"Oh !" said his father, "perhaps that is because you were a greedy boy yesterday." As Mahleka began to howl piteously, his father said, "Come, come, never mind. If you will stop crying I will give you a delicious piece of meat with a lot of fat on it for your breakfast. That will be nice, won't it ?"

The Chief then rose, and, drawing up his blanket, threw it carelessly over his shoulder. As he looked down at the grass mat on which he had been sleeping, he could dimly see two of his small sons as they lay curled up together like a couple of puppies. Stooping down, he gently unbent the legs of the lads, saying, "If you sleep like that with your legs

bent you will never grow properly." The bigger of the boys, however, was so drowsy that he did not understand what was said to him, but turned over on his other side and bent his limbs again. The Chief therefore gently stirred the lad by rubbing his ribs with his toe, at the same time telling him to rise and blow up the embers, which were still faintly glowing beneath the ashes of the previous day's fire.

As soon as the basket-work door was removed the light of dawn streamed into the hut : the cocks began to crow ; the people stretched themselves ; the dogs prowled round the hut, disturbing an old hen, which flew through the air, creating a storm of dust and noise as it came to rest on the head of the Bull of the Kraal, whose screams, in turn, added to the din and clatter, and frightened the hen as much as she had alarmed him. In a moment everybody was wide awake.

After breakfast, which consisted of boiled beef, mealie (Indian corn), porridge, and fried locusts—which tasted somewhat like kippered herrings—the Bull of the Kraal had his morning bath in a fashion that white children would think very strange. His mother took a piece of a broken earthenware vessel, and scooped up about half a cupful of water out of

a large vessel kept at the back of the hut. She mixed this water with some medicines, thinking that the use of such a lotion would make her son healthy, brave, rich, wise, and cunning. Having prepared this bath, she sat in the sun, and, placing Mahleka between her legs, let the water dribble in a thin stream over his head and shoulders, rubbing his skin as she did so. It was surprising to see how well he was washed in but a cupful of bath-water. The mother then took some grease, and, working it up between her hands, began to smear the Bull of the Kraal from head to foot. This made his skin very soft and supple, and greatly improved its colour, which became a deep, rich chocolate.

When Mahleka reached a group of his friends who were waiting for him at some distance from the kraal, he found them discussing the subject of bird-traps. One of them was maintaining very loudly that reed traps were by far the best. Well was this boy called Phiri, for, as his keen and alert face showed, he was as sharp and cunning as a wolf. No one would have thought him thirteen years of age, for he was rather small. He was, however, so inventive, so quick in his movements, so bold and fearless, and so excellent a fighter, that no one liked to fall out with him. Though very

merry and good-natured when no one crossed his will, he grew vindictive when angry, and invariably outwitted all who quarrelled with him. Invaluable to his friends and the dread of his enemies, he was much looked up to by the duller children, who thought him immensely clever.

The discussion about bird-traps was interrupted by the appearance of the Bull of the Kraal, for all were waiting for him before starting off for the morning's fun. They had decided to set bird-traps at the site of a kraal that had been abandoned a month previously ; there was still a little corn left on the floor of one of the old grain huts, and the birds had found out the fact. The whole party therefore set off in single file along the narrow footpath that led to this kraal.

It was the funniest sight to see them, hatless and bootless, hurrying off for their sport. Phiri was in front ; next to him came Mahleka ; then there followed a dozen others ; and finally came a girl about eight years old, carrying on her back a boy about three years of age. The girl's name was Mosele, which means "The tail of a dog." This horrible name had been given her because her two elder sisters had died when they were a few weeks old, and the people thought that if they gave the

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next baby a nasty name it would break the spell of bad luck. Mosele was a gentle and timid child; being very unselfish, she always thought of the other small children who could not walk far, and so was rarely seen without a tiny urchin riding on her back. She was Phiri's sweetheart, and was of such a gentle and kindly nature that she was a general favourite. It therefore frequently happened that some grown-up man, wishing to pet her, would call her "My little wife" in fun. If Phiri happened to be present on such occasions he would flare up and say, "She isn't the wife of an old man like you; she is *my* sweetheart, and I am going to marry her when I am grown up."

Mosele had tucked the small child on her back under her blanket, the ends of which she tied round her chest. The boy was thus safely carried in a pouch of blanket, and looked nearly as big as the girl who carried him. The little fellow's head wobbled about in the sunshine, and every now and then his nurse would stop and hitch him up because she felt him slipping down her back; having done this, she would hurry along the narrow path, so as to catch up the rest of the party.

Phiri, being very smart and clever, had been told off to pluck a few hairs from the tail of a cow, for

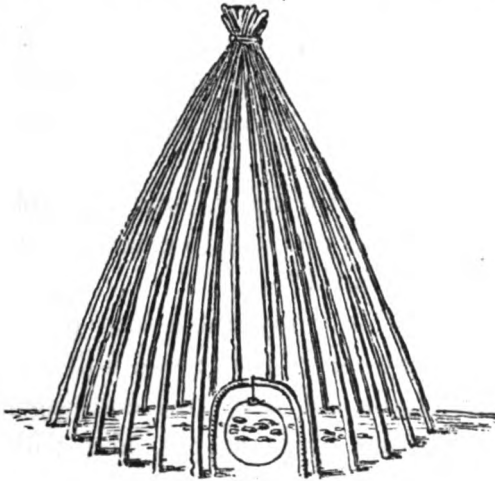
they would be needed in making the bird-traps. He thought half the fun would consist in catching the cattle-herds, belonging to another kraal, napping; for if he were to be found out pulling the hairs from the tails of the cows belonging to his father, his elder brothers would thrash him; but if he got them from the cattle belonging to another kraal, then his brothers would fight his battle if he got caught. As soon as the path led into tall grass which was about four feet high, Phiri peeped from his place of concealment, and saw, at a little distance off, a number of grazing cattle belonging to a rival kraal. He bent down and crept through the tall grass and stole up to these oxen while the cattle-herds (boys about sixteen years old) were playing a game. Phiri darted out from his cover, and before a sedate and unsuspecting old cow knew what was happening had plucked several long hairs from her tail. As he did this he mischievously called out, "Excuse me, mother!" But the astonished cow saw no reason for excusing Phiri, and kicked up her heels at the boy, who, however, was so quick in his movements that he was well out of reach of the danger. He had joined his companions, who were laughing and congratulating him on his skill, before the cattle-herds discovered

the theft. The indignant herd-boys gave chase, but since they could not go far from their own cattle, their efforts were all in vain ; so they had to content themselves with calling the robbers abusive names, which, however, Phiri and Mahleka wisely pretended not to hear.

All the angry herd-boys could do was to cut off Mosele, who was carrying the heavy child ; but black boys think it a great disgrace to hit a girl, so they scolded Mosele and told her that she was merely the tail of a dirty dog, adding that she had better let her friends know that they would surely be paid out for their theft. Mosele hurried along, and soon reached the others, who were waiting for her at the bend of the path ; for they knew that the herd-boys would not dare to chase them far away from the cattle, lest the men should beat them for neglecting their work.

When they reached the old deserted hut they set to work to build the traps, which they made in the neatest and most cunning fashion. The bigger boys sent the smaller ones to collect a number of reeds, which they cut up into pieces about nine inches long. Phiri, being the cleverest, stuck the bottom ends of the reeds into the ground in a perfect circle, bunching all the top ends together and

fastening them with a piece of hair from the cow's tail. Having thus formed a sort of cage in the shape of a pyramid or cone, he broke off one or two reeds close to the ground and made a small opening into the cage. He finished this off so neatly that it



SKETCH PLAN OF BIRD-TRAP

looked like a tiny doorway of a hut. Having done this, he took another of the hairs and prepared a slip-knot, which he fixed carefully in the doorway of his pyramid-shaped cage. The knot was so placed that the bird could only manage to reach the bait spread out on the floor of the cage by thrusting its head through the slip-knot; this the bird could

do easily ; but, on withdrawing its head, the slip-knot would tighten round its neck and hold it firmly

Phiri took some medicine which he kept in a little gourd (about the size of a chestnut) fastened by a string round his neck, and rubbed the piece of hair and the edges of the trap with the charm. Then, speaking to the imaginary birds, he said, "Ah, my fine fellows, but I have caught you already with this medicine of mine !"

"Phiri, I want to know," said Mahleka, "how does the medicine manage to catch the birds ? I want to know, Phiri !"

"Oh," said Phiri, "my uncle who gave me this charm is a very clever man : you will see that as soon as the birds get near this cunning medicine they will become quite stupid, and will not be able to help putting their heads through this noose."

When the trap was properly doctored, Phiri prayed to the Spirit of his dead grandfather, whom he looked upon as a sort of guardian angel, and said : "I beg the Spirit of my grandfather to give me good success to-day ; please be kind to Phiri, and enable him to catch many birds."

“You’ll be sure to give me a nice big bird, won’t you, Phiri?” said Mahleka, with an eye to business; “and you’ll let me eat it with all the feathers on, won’t you? You promise!”

When about a dozen traps had been made Phiri placed some white-ants’ eggs in each to act as bait, and threw a few grains of corn on to the ground so as to attract the birds. When everything was in order the children, dancing with excitement, scampered off into the bush, and waited anxiously until the birds should visit the traps.

Before long the birds which had been frightened away by the noise returned to feed on the grain. Every now and then Mahleka, who kept on peering out from his hiding-place, gave a false alarm, declaring that a bird had been caught. However, it was not long before a bird was actually caught; and since its flapping made such a noise, the others instantly took to flight. Great was the joy of the children when they found that two of the traps contained birds; they all praised Phiri, declaring that his medicines were very strong and that he was a clever maker of traps. Deftly did Phiri loosen the slip-knot, and swiftly did he kill the birds before again setting the traps. When everything was

found to be in order, the whole party ran off into the bush to devour the prey.

It is a rule amongst black people that birds caught in the *veld* belong to the grandfathers and grandmothers. Boys and girls who catch birds are supposed to take them to their grandparents, who usually bite off the heads and give them to the children, keeping the bodies for themselves. But no one ever sees the fun of this rule. Those who break it know that in doing so they run the risk of making their grandparents angry, but this makes the birds taste all the sweeter.

Phiri and Mahleka, therefore, decided to make a fire and cook the two birds on the spot; for they argued that if the birds were but eaten they could not be demanded back. It was necessary, therefore, to make a fire. Before white men visited Africa the natives never saw a box of matches, or a "House of Fire," as they sometimes call it. Black people generally keep a few sticks with red-hot glowing ends, and when they want a fire they blow these embers into flame. But when the fire has gone out by accident they rub two sticks together very briskly until the wood bursts into flame. The big boys consequently hunted for two pieces of wood for this purpose. As they could not find

the right sort of tree, they decided to do their best with two pieces of ordinary stick. They drilled a small hole in one piece of wood, and then pointed another piece much as we do a pencil. A big boy sat down and put the first stick between his feet; he then inserted the pointed end of the second stick in the hole, and began to twirl it swiftly between the palms of his two hands, much in the way an English boy spins a big top. But twirl as hard as he would, he could not get the wood to burst into flame. It evidently needed greater skill than his to make a fire with unsuitable sticks.

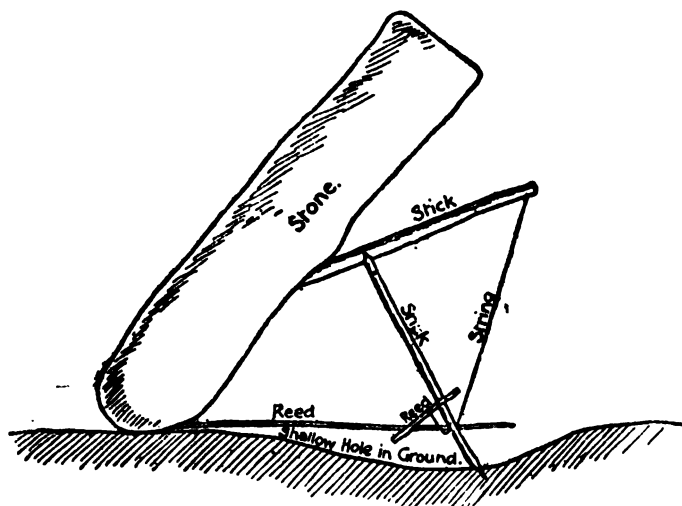
It was therefore decided to send one of the girls home to steal an ember from the fireplace in one of the huts. Of course, Mosele, the unselfish, offered to go and do this. She first of all hunted for two bits of a broken earthenware pot, which she hid under her blanket, and then started off to steal some fire. Knowing it would not be an easy thing to do, she decided to use a little guile in order to put the grown-up people off the scent. She therefore stopped to pick up some firewood, and, making a little bundle of it, placed it on her head and ran home. The people were surprised to find even Mosele anxious to add to the stock of

fuel, for as a rule black girls grumble a great deal about the drudgery of collecting firewood. When no one was looking, Mosele picked out a red-hot ember from the fireplace, and hid it between the two pieces of broken pot which she had hidden under her blanket. She then hurried off to the bush, and arrived panting amidst the circle of excited bird-catchers. In a moment or two a fire was made, and the birds were set roasting with all their feathers on. Long before they were properly cooked they were pronounced "done," for every one was afraid that some passer-by might see them at their forbidden feast. The half-cooked birds were pulled to pieces and shared all round, Phiri choosing some nice pieces for his sweetheart, Mosele, so as to reward her for the risks she had run.

As they were in the middle of their feast there was a false alarm, for one of the boys said that he could see a man in the distance coming towards them. Mahleka tried to gulp down his portion, but one of the feathers got caught between his teeth. He made dreadful grimaces as he struggled to swallow the wretched feather, and looked very guilty and alarmed when he found he could not move it. But it was soon found out that the

alarm was false, and so Mosele had plenty of time to pull the feather away from between his teeth.

When the food was finished the bird-catchers went to visit the traps, but in vain ; the birds had



evidently been frightened by the smoke of the fire. Phiri's cunning medicine seemed to have lost its power, though he explained it was not so ; he said the medicine was not intended to attract birds, but merely to make them silly when they came near it.

Mahleka suggested that a different sort of bird-trap should be made. A large flat stone was

selected, and propped on its end over a little hole scooped out in the ground, in which the bait was placed. The stone was so balanced on pieces of stick that the moment a bird alighted on one of them the weight would fall and crush the bird. The trap is not unlike the brick ones used by English boys, though the sticks were arranged in a somewhat different manner, as a glance at the picture will show.

Time is nothing to black people, and hour by hour the boys and girls sat in the shade waiting for the birds to return. No sooner was one caught than the fire, which was not allowed to die out, was blown up and the bird cooked. Thus the morning wore away, all being as happy as kings, and living now in expectation and now in enjoyment of their spoils. Meanwhile the sun crept up in the sky, and when the shadows grew very short everybody knew it was time to go home for the mid-day meal. Since black people have no watches and clocks, they have to guess the hour by the position of the sun and the length of the shadows : it is surprising how accurately they can tell the time in this simple fashion. The fire was stamped out, so that it should not act as a tell-tale, and every trap was carefully set, for the children intended to

return later on. Then they marched off in single file along the Kafir path, and reached home with the most innocent faces, though some very suspicious marks of food around their mouths betrayed the secret all sought to hide.

CHAPTER III

THE MID-DAY MEAL AND NOMGOGWANA

As the bird-catchers entered the kraal they noticed a most delicious odour of some very savoury food, and consequently began to hang about the hut in which the cooking was going on, hoping that they might receive some dainty morsel. The men evidently knew that there was not enough of the nice food to go all round, and so thought it a very good opportunity to have a little fun. The Chief said, "You can smell there is some very nice food in the pot, but it will never be properly cooked while you all stand about like that. You know what your grandmother has often told you; so don't forget that the food will never be done until Nomgogwana has been asked to come to dinner. You had better just run off into the *veld* and call him."

Now Nomgogwana is a fabulous monster who is very fond of eating tit-bits. When he smells nice

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food being prepared he expects to be asked to dinner; but if he is neglected he retaliates by making the meat incapable of being cooked, no matter how long it may be boiled. As soon as the boys and girls were told to go and call Nomgogwana they ran off to a hill close by and shouted out, "Nomgogwana, Nomgogwana, come along quick: there is some delicious food being cooked at the kraal." They then raced home, all agog with expectation, and said, "We called Nomgogwana ever so loudly, but he didn't answer us." "What a pity," said the Chief; "you know the food can't be cooked till he comes. You had better go and call him again."

They, however, took no notice of this remark, but kept hanging round, waiting till the cooking-pot should be taken off the fire, every now and then dropping a few broad hints that the food was sufficiently cooked. But the grown-up people looked very indifferent and took no notice of such remarks. At last the Bull nestled up to his father to have his skin stroked, and said, "Baba, I think the food is done even though Nomgogwana hasn't come: it smells as if it were nicely cooked." The old Chief merely shook his head and said, "That can't be: don't you know the food can't be cooked

until Nomgogwana comes?" Then, after a long pause, he added, "If you don't go and fetch him you know what will happen: he will wait till we take the pot off the fire, and then he will smell the food and will come, thinking it is ready to be eaten; but when he finds it is not properly cooked he will be very angry, and will eat all the boys and girls he can find; and he will be certain to pick out the plumpest." This last remark he said looking at the Bull of the Kraal, who, as you know, was very chubby, and looked as if he would be most delicious to eat. An uncle who had been invited to share the dinner nodded his head and added, "If I were Nomgogwana I know which of them I would choose to eat." The Bull began to feel very uneasy, so he suggested to the others that it might be well to try once more, and see whether Nomgogwana would come or not.

As they were leaving the hut the Chief called out, "The reason Nomgogwana did not hear you last time was because you did not go nearly far enough away. Be sure to go far, far away this time." So they ran away as hard as they could, and called all over the country to Nomgogwana.

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As soon as they had left the hut the old Chief began to chuckle, and told his wife to take the pot off the fire. Then the men enjoyed their delicacy in peace. The Chief, however, put a piece on one side for Mahleka. When they had finished the food they noticed some very disappointed little people returning to the hut. "Oh, dear, we are so sorry," said the Chief. "Nomgogwana came just after you left the hut, and he was so very, very hungry that we dared not wait for you to return; so all the food is finished, except a small piece which Nomgogwana especially left behind for the Bull of the Kraal."

It is the custom amongst black people for the men to eat by themselves first of all, and for the women and children to finish up what the men have left behind. The men always share the delicacies with one another; thus when a Kaffir receives from a white man such a thing as a sardine he invariably shares it with all the other men who may be present, even though there are a dozen of them. But they need not necessarily share it with the women. Similarly, when boys are eating food and are given a nice morsel they always divide it amongst all the boys present,

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but they need not share it amongst the girls. But the girls, when they receive a nice portion of food, are supposed to offer some of it to the boys. The only time a person may eat a dainty piece of food all alone without sharing it with his fellows is when the chief calls him up and gives him a special helping. It is thought very rude for a man to share such a special gift of food with others. So the Chief called up Mahleka and held out to him a piece of porcupine, for it was this that had been cooking in the pot. The Bull held out both his hands to receive the gift, for holding out two hands is a polite way of implying that the gift is a very great one. Mahleka was not allowed to give any of this food to his friends, and so he sat down by himself while all the others looked on with longing eyes, wishing they were Bulls of the Kraal. The big boys sat by themselves at one side of the hut, while the women and the rest of the children sat in a circle on the ground, the pot containing the mealie porridge being placed in the centre. One by one they helped themselves by taking a small handful of porridge from the pot, any child that was too small to help itself receiving a portion in its hands, or else in a wooden spoon. Mosele was very busy seeing that the very small babies

had nice helpings before she helped herself, but all the other girls greedily looked after themselves. The children enjoyed the simple food, for they were hungry after their morning's fun. They kept pestering their mothers with questions about Nomgogwana, and the women found it very hard to find suitable answers. A big boy was heard to say, "I don't believe there is such a person as Nomgogwana; I believe it's all lies," but this heresy was at once resented by everybody else. "Forsooth!" said the boy's mother; "since when did you become wiser than your grandfather?" The boy felt snubbed, for amongst black people to pretend to be as wise as grown-up people is thought to be very wrong. He felt very sorry he had spoken, and determined to keep his doubts to himself in future. The others did not see through the stratagem, but quite believed the men were serious when they spoke about Nomgogwana. Now don't run away with the idea that black people are cruel, for as a matter of fact they are really very kind to their children, and give them a taste of all the nice food that is being eaten, often stinting themselves so as not to disappoint them. Yet now and then, when a very great number of hungry boys and girls keep hanging round the

cooking-pot, or when the delicacy is far too small to go all round, the men can't resist the fun of sending the youngsters scampering over the hills in their vain hunt for Nomgogwana.

CHAPTER IV

MORE BIRD - TRAPS

As soon as the meal was over the Bull of the Kraal was very impatient to hurry back to see whether there were any more birds in the traps, but Phiri suggested that they should try and catch some rats as well. He therefore begged Mahleka to wait until he could get some melon-seed, which, he said, made very good bait for rats.

Now Mahleka's sweetheart was a girl whose name was Nokofa, which means "The Mother of Death." She was a jolly, fat girl, several years older than the Bull, whom she always protected. In fact, she might almost have been called his slave. Mahleka knew she was very fond of rats, and so he said, "Oh, yes, do let's catch some rats, for then I can give some to Nokofa; she is awfully fond of them. Aren't you, Nokofa?" The girl was very pleased, and said she knew where there was some very nice

melon-seed. As soon as they had found the bait they all hurried back with beating hearts to visit their happy hunting-ground. As they ran along they kept wondering whether there would be any birds in the traps they had set before dinner, the general opinion being that there would be at least half a dozen. Their faces fell when they found all the traps utterly destroyed. They wondered how this could have happened, for they were at a loss to explain it, unless, indeed, as Nokofa suggested, some oxen had trampled on the traps. However, Phiri pointed out to them that probably the herd-boys, from whom they had stolen the cow's hair in the morning, had done it; for they said they would retaliate. It was not long before they saw these odious herd-boys in the distance actually jeering and scoffing at them, and also saying some horribly rude things about Phiri's grandmother. This is an insult no Kafir boy will stand; and though the cattle-herds were much older and stronger than the boys whose traps had been destroyed, yet the latter determined to be avenged. It was obviously useless to think of fighting these big lads in the open, for that could only end in defeat; the only chance of redress lay in cunning. They put their heads together and suggested plan after plan of

revenge, but most of the suggestions were wild and hopelessly impossible. At length Phiri proposed an excellent plan. He advised that they should pretend to take no notice of the jeering enemy, but that they should go and mend all the traps and spend the afternoon, as they had spent the morning, bird-catching. He pointed out that the herd-boys would be sure to sleep while watching their cattle, and that it would be possible to drive some of the oxen into the gardens of the rival kraal. The herd-boys would thus get well thrashed by their parents for allowing the oxen to destroy the gardens. This plan was adopted with great glee, and all praised Phiri for his cunning.

The boys at once set to work to mend the traps, and when this was done Mahleka and his sweetheart Nokofa were ordered to climb a tree from which they could see the herd-boys. They were told to hide themselves carefully and to watch until their enemies were overcome with drowsiness in the afternoon heat. Nokofa and Mahleka were not very willing to accept this unpleasant work, but their objections vanished when they were promised the first two rats that were caught. Nokofa stipulated, however, that as a reward for their work they

should have these rats with fur, tails, and whiskers all complete.

The afternoon wore on slowly, and many birds and rats were caught. The first two rats were half roasted and sent secretly to Nokofa and the Bull, who were hiding in a tree, and who gobbled the food eagerly, Nokofa remarking, "I believe rats are even nicer to eat than porcupines."

The unsuspecting herd-boys noticed the smoke of the fire, and so felt sure their enemies were going to spend the whole afternoon bird-catching, and were not going to retaliate. They consequently lay under the shade of some trees, merely watching the grazing oxen from a distance. It was not long before they were overpowered by slumber, for cattle-herding is monotonous and dreary work. As soon as the watchers in the trees saw this, they climbed down and told Phiri that the herds were asleep. The girls were all told to hide in the bush, while the boys, led out by Phiri and Mahleka, crept up stealthily, and slowly headed off a dozen of the grazing oxen, gently driving them towards the gardens, amidst which they left them feeding greedily. The young rascals then stole off to the bush unobserved, climbed trees from which they

could watch the fun, and waited the result of their mischief.

They had not long to wait. The owner of the kraal had been spending the morning at a friend's kraal some miles away, and was returning to his home, when, to his surprise, he saw a dozen oxen grazing in his own gardens. At a glance he recognised that they were his own cattle, and so he looked round to see where his herd-boys were. He saw his young sons sleeping in the shade, and his heart suddenly filled with wrath. He made his plans swiftly. He went to his hut and told the children to go quietly and drive the oxen out of the gardens ; he then called to a couple of men who were sleeping in the shade of the cattle kraal. The three men armed themselves with sticks, and, to the intense delight of the boys watching in the trees, encircled the sleeping lads. The father aroused them with a shout, and the unwary herd-boys awoke to find themselves surprised and surrounded. To be caught napping when on herding duty is a very great crime, and so the culprits were half paralysed by terror. But that was not all. They speedily took in the fact that they had allowed the cattle to wander into their own gardens. Now for a boy to allow his cattle to wander

into the gardens belonging to *other* people is a smart thing, provided the fact is not found out by the owners of the garden ; but for a boy to destroy his own father's gardens is utterly stupid. These unfortunate young herd-boys therefore found themselves caught red-handed in committing two of the greatest offences, and knew they were in for the soundest thrashing they had ever received. The Bull of the Kraal and Phiri, who had hidden away in the trees, were simply tingling with expectation, for the boys who had ruined their traps were about to be well paid out. With great delight they watched the thrashing, and it was all they could do not to jeer at their enemies. Not a sound did the victims make when the sticks of the angry men came whistling through the air on to their naked backs : they knew that if they cried out they would get an extra thrashing for not being brave and manly.

Phiri and his companions were aware that their pleasure had but begun, for the chief pleasure would consist in telling the story to their friends ; so they descended from their hiding-place in the trees and ran away. When they reached their home they began to tell of their victory and of the defeat that had overtaken their enemies. Phiri picked up a

stick, and, making some of the smaller boys take off their blankets, pretended to get in a towering passion as he threatened them : he acted the whole scene, but especially imitated the thrashing of the herd-boys in such a vigorous way that he caused great merriment. For days and days the story was told to all the boys in the neighbouring kraals, and the victors were so praised for their guile that their heads became quite swollen with pride. They got more pleasure out of the telling of the story than they had in seeing their enemies punished.

Phiri was wise for his age, and was aware that it would never do to be praised to the exclusion of the Bull of the Kraal ; he therefore exaggerated the cleverness of Mahleka in watching up in the tree and in turning the cattle into the gardens. The old Chief chuckled when he heard the story, and said to his wife, "Do you notice that Phiri does not take all the credit to himself, but gives much of it to Mahleka ? He will make a clever councillor when he grows up, for he will not only be very shrewd, but will see that Mahleka gets plenty of praise."

There were still several hours before sunset, and so Phiri suggested that they should make some bird-lime ; to this all agreed, and were marched off

under Phiri's leadership to collect some pods from a certain tree. When the seeds are bruised and boiled they yield a strong glue, which is sometimes used for catching even such animals as hares. The onlookers waited with great impatience as Phiri boiled down the seeds in a broken piece of an old pot. As soon as the bird-lime was made they hurried off to the river and selected a tree of which the birds were very fond. They smeared the twigs of several of the branches with the bird-lime, and then ran off to a distance and hid themselves in the bush.

To keep them quiet Phiri made a bow and arrow: the bow he formed out of a straight stick, the string being plaited from a very strong kind of grass. He fixed on the end of the arrow a little lump of wood about the size of the cork of a medicine bottle, knowing that such an arrow would knock the birds over without damaging the bodies as much as a sharp arrow would. He then took from the bag which hung round his neck a small shell-bangle, and explained that any one wearing it as a charm would shoot with unerring aim.

The rest of the afternoon was spent alternately in running to the river to see whether any birds had

been caught with the bird-lime and in hurrying back to the bush in order to shoot birds with the bow and arrow. When the sun began to set they started home, delighted with their day's work. Phiri and Mahleka, however, lagged behind; and as they were chatting the Bull of the Kraal suddenly remembered that he had promised to get some birds for his grandmother, who said she would not tell any fairy-tales at night unless she received some birds for her supper. Now the children had eaten all the birds they had caught, and so Mahleka said to his companion, "You are so clever, Phiri, I am sure you could catch some birds, even though they have gone to roost for the night."

Phiri said he had heard his big brother talk of a very good way of catching birds at night, but said he had never tried it.

"Let's go and try," said Mahleka; "it will be such fun if we could get some birds for grandmother. We could hide them in the store-hut; and if grandmother will tell us stories without asking for birds we could eat them ourselves. Do let's!"

To this Phiri agreed, and he and Mahleka ran back to the river. The birds had already gone to roost amongst the reeds, and only here and there

did a bird give an occasional chirp. The Bull of the Kraal was placed at the edge of a bed of reeds, and was told to chase any birds that flew by him and to knock them over with his kerrie—a stick with a big knob at one end. Going to the bed of reeds where it was thickest, Phiri crept up very quietly on his hands and knees, and when he was close to the birds began to hiss and blow like a puff-adder. At the dreaded sound the birds flew out of the reeds where they were roosting, and, being too sleepy and frightened to fly far, were easily run down and killed by Mahleka and Phiri, both of whom were so skilful in throwing the kerrie that they could hit birds even on the wing. When they had killed five they went home, and, having hidden the birds in the store-hut, joined all the people, who were gathering for their evening meal.



BIRD CATCHING.

CHAPTER V

THE HEAVENLY MAIDENS: THE FAIRY-TALE FOR THE FIRST NIGHT

DURING the evening meal the Chief announced that in a few days' time there would be an Evening Party in honour of the Bull of the Kraal. This caused great pleasure, and all the youngsters discussed the news with one another in loud whispers. When supper was finished the family gathered round the fire: the men talked of high matters of state—that is to say, they gossiped gravely about their cattle and their crops. The conversation turned chiefly on a certain calf that had been born a week before; this calf had supplied conversation already for some six nights, and would, apparently, serve for the main topic of conversation for another six. The women huddled up together and chatted to their heart's content, the children surrounding an old grandmother who was well stricken in years and bent in body, and who began to talk about the

good old days of her youth. Mahleka could never bring himself to believe that his grandmother had ever been young and beautiful, and he asked her gravely whether she had not been born an old woman. When she told him to be respectful to his betters he protested that he only meant that he could not believe that she had ever been anything but a grandmother ; and great was his astonishment when she told him that she had once been a baby with a grandmother of her own.

“ Won’t you be a grandfather yourself one of these fine days ? ” said the old woman.

“ Oh, yes, of course. But I want to know, did you give her the birds you caught in the traps, Grandmother ? ” asked the Bull, to the astonishment of the other children, who thought him treading on very delicate ground. She, however, laughed, and avoided the awkward question by talking to Nokofa, who was clamouring that she should tell them a story. The old woman was as sharp as a needle ; and so, neglecting the pointed question asked by the Bull of the Kraal, she drew a bow at a venture and exclaimed, “ Tell you a story indeed ! And why should I tell you a fairy-tale when you have not brought me any of the birds you have been catching ? ”

Noticing that the children looked rather guilty and kept very quiet, she continued: "For all I know, you may have been catching birds to-day: indeed, now I think of it, I noticed that your mouths looked very dirty at noon. And didn't I tell you that I wouldn't tell you fairy-tales unless you brought me some birds to eat? And, moreover, Mahleka promised to catch me some." Saying this, she looked glum and turned her eyes to the floor.

This was a very awkward question. Mosele filled the gap by promising to hunt next day for some nice edible roots, while one after another protested that they had tried ever so hard to catch birds for her; and they managed to look her in the face without the slightest betrayal of their guilt.

The grandmother pretended to be very cross and surly, and said she couldn't tell any stories that night, as no one gave her any birds.

"But will you tell us a nice *long* story to-night," called out Mahleka, "if I get you some birds at once?"

The old woman thought it quite safe to give the promise.

"Very well, Grandmother," called out Mahleka,

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to everybody's surprise, "I will go and get you some."

The Bull beckoned to Phiri, and the two left the hut, and in a few moments returned with three birds, which they put in the grandmother's lap. She was delighted, and at once began to think over the stories she knew, while one child begged for this story and another begged for that. A big mischievous boy called out, "Grandmother, tell us the story about the cannibals who ate the fat little boy."

"No, don't," bellowed the Bull of the Kraal, for he was very much afraid of cannibals, and knew the story was to be told to frighten him. "But do tell us about Skin-sore and the Heavenly Maidens: it's ever so long since you told us that story."

There were general shouts of "Oh, yes, Grandmother, do!" The old woman took the Bull in her lap and began to stroke his skin. She then cleared her throat, making an uncanny noise that sent a delightful shiver of expectation down everybody's back, looked very important and wise, and thus began her fairy-tale:

SKIN-SORE AND THE HEAVENLY MAIDENS

Once upon a time there lived a man who had several children, and amongst them was a small boy called Tshinyamamhezi, or Skin-sore. He was given that name because his skin was covered all over with sores. One day he said to his father, "I am going for a walk in the bush."

His father was astonished that so small a boy should go all alone in the bush, and replied, "But why are you going all alone in the bush?"

Tshinyamamhezi said, "Oh, I am just going for a walk because I am Skin-sore; that is all."

"But are you not afraid of the lions and of the other wild animals? Are you not afraid of death?"

"Oh, no," said Skin-sore, "I am not afraid of death."

"If that is the case," said his father, "then go for a walk."

And so Tshinyamamhezi walked off and soon was lost to sight.

Before long he came to a place where he saw many people descending from the sky to bathe in a beautiful pool. So in the pool the heavenly people

bathed. When Tshinyamamhezi saw that these beautiful maidens visited a pool so near to his father's kraal, he said to himself, "Oh, people from the heavens are bathing here; I will not go on with my journey, but will go back to my home: perhaps they will return to-morrow." So back he turned to his kraal.

At this point the Bull of the Kraal interrupted the story and cried out excitedly, "But, Grandmother, why didn't he go and bathe in the pool with them? I should if I had been there." At this interruption there were shouts of laughter, and then angry cries of "Shut up," "Listen to the story," "Don't interrupt." Nokofa took Mahleka in her arms and begged him to be quiet and listen to the story without talking. She then placed him in her lap. The Bull placed his first finger in his mouth and began to suck it, for black children suck their first fingers, and not their thumbs. The old grandmother became quite confused, and said, "Let me see: where was I? Oh! I remember: Skin-sore went back to his kraal." Then she continued:

Early next morning the boy returned to the place where he had seen the heavenly people bathing on the previous day. He hid himself in the reeds and

waited to see whether the heavenly people would return to the pool. He had not long been in hiding when sure enough he saw people with bright-coloured wings descend from the sky. But before these people, who were all most beautiful maidens, went into the water, they took off their wings and left them on the bank of the pool. So while the maidens were sporting in the water, Skin-sore crept out from his hiding-place and took possession of the wings belonging to four of the loveliest of the maidens.

When the girls had finished bathing they fixed on their wings and prepared to fly off into the heavens. But the four maidens, whose wings Skin-sore had stolen, hunted about for their wings, but could not find them. So they said to their companions, who were just flying off to the sky, "Where have our wings gone to? We cannot find them anywhere." "As for us," said the others, "we do not know what has happened to your wings. Forsooth, it is not our business; you should look after your own wings."

With that the maidens flew off into the heavens, leaving behind them their four sisters who were hunting about for their wings.

Skin-sore then came forth from his hiding-place,

and, speaking to the black girls, said, "And pray, what are you looking for, my pretty maidens?"

"Oh, Tshinyamamhezi, we are looking for our feathers which we have lost."

"But I have got your feathers," said the boy. "What will you do for me if I return them to you?"

"Give us back our wings and be our husband," replied the maidens.

"Very well," said Skin-sore, "I will give you back your wings when we reach my home."

"Oh, no, no!" said the maidens. "Give us back our feathers here and now; then we will go with you to your home and become your wives."

But Skin-sore refused to do this, for he feared they would fly away from him if he gave them back their wings. But when he saw the maidens looking so lovely through their tears, he began to relent, and said, "But, my pretty maidens, if I give you back your beautiful feathers will you not fly away and leave me all alone?"

"Oh, no, we will not," said the girls. "We promise faithfully not to fly away; we will go to your kraal and become your wives. How could we go and appear before your parents without our feathers?"

Now Skin-sore thought that maidens who looked so lovely could not break a promise. He therefore gave them their wings, helping to fix the feathers on to their shoulders. No sooner, however, was this done than the Heavenly Maidens spread their wings and soared away into the sky, leaving Skin-sore weeping by the pool.

For some time Mahleka had been burning to ask questions, and it was all Nokofa could do to keep him quiet. But now he could contain himself no longer. "The great silly!" said he. "I would not have been so stupid." But a big sister poked him in the ribs, and all the other children called out, "Go on, Grandmother; never mind Mahleka."

As soon as the children were quiet the old woman continued:

Next day Skin-sore lay in wait by the pool, for he felt sure the maidens would return to bathe. No sooner had he hidden himself in the reeds than he saw the maidens descending from the sky to bathe in the water. They took off their wings before plunging in the pool, and piled them up on the bank. As soon as the girls were sporting in the water, Skin-sore crept out of his hiding-place,

and once more took possession of the wings belonging to the four beautiful maidens. When they had finished bathing they looked about in vain for their wings, and said to their companions who were ready to fly away, "But where have our wings gone to? We cannot find them."

"As for us," replied the others, "we do not know what has become of your feathers. Forsooth, is it our duty to take care of your feathers?"

With that they flew up into the sky, leaving their four sisters behind. So when Skin-sore saw this, he came out from his hiding-place and said to the four girls, "And what might you be looking for, my pretty maidens?"

"Oh, we are looking for our wings, for we want to fly away into the heavens after our sisters," said the girls.

"But it is I who have your wings," said the boy.

"Very well," said the maidens; "give us back our wings and marry us."

"But if I give you back your wings will you not fly away into the heavens as you did yesterday?"

"Oh, no," said the maidens; "we could not think of flying away from you if you would but be good enough to give us our wings."

"Very well," said the boy; "I will give you back your wings at my kraal; but I will not give them back to you till you are there."

"Oh, no, no! Give us back our wings here and now, and we will promise not to fly away from you again," said the maidens, with tears in their eyes. But the boy was not to be deceived again by their beauty, so he replied, "As for me, I do not wish to give you back your wings just yet."

So, since he refused to give them back their wings at the pool, the maidens went with Skin-sore to his home. When the boy reached his kraal the people were all astonished to see him with four beautiful wives, and said, "Hallo, Skin-sore, where did you get your wives?"

He answered in a careless tone, "Oh, as for that, I just found them, that is all."

The girls then asked Skin-sore to give them back their wings as he had promised, but the boy asked them if they would not fly away if he did so. When they promised not to do so, he gave them their wings, and helped them to fix them on their backs. No sooner were their wings fixed than they spread them out and flew away into the sky. The people of his kraal laughed at Skin-sore, and asked him why he gave the girls back their wings;

he replied that he never thought they would fly away from him like that.

“I knew they would fly away again,” said the Bull of the Kraal. But no one took any notice of him this time.

“Go on, Grandmother,” the children cried out. “What happened then?”

The next morning Skin-sore hid himself again at the pool, and when the maidens came to bathe he took possession of the wings of the four maidens. On coming out of the water they hunted for their wings, and asked their companions if they had seen them; but they replied that they did not know what had happened to them. So Skin-sore came out of his hiding-place and showed the girls that he had their wings.

“Give us back our wings, Tshinyamamhezi, and marry us,” said the girls.

But he refused to give them back their wings till they returned with him to his kraal. When they reached the boy's home they asked for their wings, but Skin-sore refused lest they should fly away and leave him alone.

“Well, come with us to our home in the heavens,” said the maidens.

"Very well," said the boy, "let us go."

The maidens then flew up into the sky, carrying Skin-sore with them. When they reached their home in the sky the parents of the maidens said secretly to them, "But where did you get that boy from?"

"We found him down below," said the girls.

"Many thanks for bringing him," said the parents; "we need some more medicine, and we can cut him up and make him into medicine very nicely."

"Very well," said the girls; "we can kill him and make him into medicine this afternoon."

So during the afternoon they sought an opportunity for killing the boy. But a rat that had overheard the people talking went to Skin-sore and said, "O Man, when you hear people calling you this afternoon do not go to them, for I heard them consulting together to kill you and make you into medicine."

So the boy agreed, saying, "Very well, rat, I won't go there; though they call me, I will not go there."

After a short time the boy heard the parents of the girls calling his name, saying, "Tshinyamam-hezi, come here a moment, for we wish to speak to you."

But the boy, pretending to be ill, said, "No, sirs, I am not coming. I feel pains all over my body."

So when the people saw that their plot had failed, they said to one another, "Well, let us leave him alone to-day; another time we can kill him."

So they let the boy alone. Later on in the day the boy met the maidens, and said to them, "As for me, I wish to return to my kraal down there; are you not going to return thither?"

"No," said they; "we are not going there any more. What is there for us to get down there?"

"Well," said Skin-sore, "seeing that when we were on earth it was you, who had wings, that said, 'Let us go to our kraal in the heavens,' and yet now say, 'We are not any longer going to the kraal down there on the earth,' how can I, who have no wings, manage to descend that I may reach my kraal on the earth?"

"Oh!" said the maidens, "if that is the case you can just stay on here in the heavens."

The boy, however, saw through their plot, and said, "But I do not want to stay on up here any longer, for the people wish to kill me, saying, 'We want to make him into medicine.' Did you ever yet see a man who was made into medicine, my pretty maidens?"

"Oh, that is all lies," said the girls; "some one has been deceiving you. No one here wants to make you into medicine. You will not be killed if you stay on here."

"Yes, I shall be killed," said the boy.

Happening to meet an ant-bear, then a spider, and finally the rat who had warned him, Skin-sore said to them, "I want to make you my friends, because I wish to return to my kraal."

The rat said, "Do you, then, want to go back to your kraal?"

"Yes," said the boy.

"Well," said the rat, "if we help you to get down to earth, what will you give us as reward?"

"I will give you just whatever you wish," answered the lad.

The rat said, "I want some porridge-scrapings, some pumpkin-seeds, and some ox-hides."

"And I want some ant-heaps," said the ant-bear.

"And I want some flies," said the spider.

"All right," said the boy; "I will look for them all when I get to the earth, and will pay you in full when we reach my kraal down below."

The rat then said, "Let me go and get some food to eat, for we shall need it on our journey."

"Very well," said the little man; "run along and get what you can."

So off ran the rat, and hunted about till it found some mealies, which it gave to Skin-sore. Then the rat said, "Ant-bear, bore a hole in the floor of the sky."

So the ant-bear began to bore, and soon made a hole right through the floor of the sky. It then said, "I have done my work; now, spider, it is your turn."

Then the spider said, "Come on, then, all of you; let us descend to the earth."

So the spider set to work and began to spin a thread, by which they all climbed down, taking ten days to reach the earth. When they reached the kraal Skin-sore gave the rat porridge-scrapings, pumpkin-seeds, and ox-hides; he gave the spider its flies, and the ant-bear its ant-heaps.

"Many thanks," said all the animals.

The next morning Skin-sore hid in the reeds by the pool and waited for the Heavenly Maidens, who, sure enough, returned once more. They took off their wings before plunging into the water, and piled them up on the bank. While the girls were bathing, Skin-sore crept out of his hiding-place,

and once more took possession of the wings belonging to the four beautiful maidens.

When the girls had finished bathing they looked about in vain for their wings, and said to their companions who were flying away, "But wherever can our wings have gone to? We cannot find them."

"How should we know what has become of your feathers?" said the others. "Is it our duty to take care of your wings?"

Having said that, they flew up into the sky. When Skin-sore saw this he came out from his hiding-place, and said to the four girls who were left behind, "And what might you be looking for, my pretty maidens?"

"Oh, Skin-sore," said the girls, "we are looking for our wings."

"Ah! it is I who have your wings," said the boy.

"Very well," said the maidens; "give us back our wings and marry us."

"Never again will I give you your wings," said the boy, "and we shall see then what you have wherewith to fly away into the heavens."

"Oh, give us back our wings but this time!" pleaded the girls. But Skin-sore was not to be entreated by the girls, though they looked so

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beautiful. "Never again will I give you your wings," he answered, "for every time I did so previously you flew away."

The boy therefore set fire to the wings and burnt them up; so the Heavenly Maidens settled down there, while Skin-sore built his huts and made the maidens his wives. One is how many?

The old grandmother gave a great grunt to show the tale was finished. The Bull of the Kraal had been bursting with desire to interrupt the story, and so as soon as it was finished he asked his grandmother a dozen questions: he "wanted to know" whether the Heavenly Maidens made good wives, whether they worked well, whether they were able to carry heavy weights on their heads, and a dozen similar things; he was specially anxious to know whether there were any pools near their kraal where Heavenly Maidens bathed, and whether they could be caught in bird-traps; he "wanted to know" what colour their wings were, and whether baby Heavenly Maidens had nice little wings or not. Without waiting for an answer to these questions, he declared stoutly that he would never be so silly as Skin-sore. Several voices called out, "Oh, it is very easy to be wise after the birds have

flown. Since when did you become wiser than the old people ?”

The children begged for another story, but the grandmother told them it was time to go to bed, but added that if they would only bring her some birds next evening she would perhaps tell them another fairy-tale.

All the people in the hut, wrapped in their blankets, were just beginning to doze, when they were aroused by the following words, shouted out lustily: “I want to know, will you be sure to invite the Heavenly Maidens to my evening party? You will, won’t you, Mame !”

A burst of laughter greeted the Bull’s question, and a dozen heads were poked out of the blankets, and there was a general cry of “Shh, shh !” But it was not before he had wrung from his mother a promise that the Heavenly Maidens should be invited to the evening party that Mahleka was persuaded to go to sleep.

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THE SECOND DAY

CHAPTER VI

BATHING AND GAMES

"I SAY, Phiri," cried a voice from beneath his mother's blanket next morning at dawn, "let's make oxen and horses and dolls out of clay. It would be such fun, wouldn't it?"

It was, of course, the voice of the Bull of the Kraal; and Phiri, who was very clever at modelling in clay, as at everything else, at once agreed to the proposal—especially as a girl named Tiye (which means "Hatred") chimed in, "Yes, do let's make them to-day; and I'll make some bangles of grass and beads, and then your boy-dolls can marry my girl-dolls, and we can play at a real wedding-dance."

"But they must pay up their dowry properly," insisted Mahleka, who wished to have everything done correctly.

"Of course they must," answered Phiri.

"I say, Tiye," said the Bull, "don't you think you could make some Heavenly Maiden dolls? It would be great fun."

Tiye, however, said that she didn't know how to make wings; and, since they were essential to Heavenly Maidens, Mahleka's face fell, and he suddenly seemed to lose all interest in dolls.

All through breakfast Mahleka kept on pestering his grandmother with questions about Heavenly Maidens. He "wanted to know" whether they had feathers all over their bodies in addition to their wings; he "wanted to know" how often they came down to bathe; he "wanted to know" the best way to catch them, so as to have them at his evening party. The old grandmother thought it very unlucky to speak about surprise stories before sunset, so she told Mahleka that if he talked about fairy-tales while the sun was shining two great big horns would grow out of his forehead. Mahleka was alarmed when he heard this, and at once put up his hands to his head to feel whether there were any signs of budding horns, and could not understand why all the grown-up people laughed at him as he did this.

"But I want to kno-o-o-o-ow," he began to

call out ; but his mother broke in, saying, " Yes, my child, you want to know a great many things ; but what grandmother says is quite true ; and what is more, everybody knows that the clouds will all fall on our heads if we tell surprise stories before it is dark."

Mahleka therefore turned the matter over in his mind all through the meal, and kept wondering how he ought to set to work to catch Heavenly Maidens. He decided to suggest to all his friends that they should not spend the morning making dolls, as they had arranged, but should spend it bathing in the river ; for he secretly wished to hunt in all the pools, so as to see whether by chance a Heavenly Maiden or two might be caught napping.

When the meal was over, Mahleka called out, " I say, let's go bathing to-day : I think it would be awfully jolly."

" Oh, but I thought," said Tiye, " that we were going to make dolls this morning."

" No, don't let's make dolls : let's go bathing," said Mahleka, " for we can make dolls this afternoon. Don't you think so, Phiri ?"

" No," said Phiri ; " let's make more traps, for then we can catch some birds for Grandmother, so that she will tell us a lot of fairy-tales to-night."

"Oh," said Mahleka, "you can make some bird-traps close to the river and leave them while we are bathing." He hesitated for a minute or two, and then, unable to keep his thoughts to himself, said, "You know we might catch some Heavenly Maidens, for they are very fond of bathing in the rivers."

All agreed to this, and everybody got up at once, anxious to be off. A small boy ran up to Mosele and begged the good-natured girl to carry him to the river. She asked another girl to lift the child up and place him in her blanket; and as soon as this was done, she settled the tiny fellow comfortably on her back by giving him a shake or two.

Since none of them wore boots and shoes, or trousers, or hats, no time was wasted in getting ready to go out. They needed no towels, for after bathing they were going to lie about in the sun till dry, only to plunge in the water again later on. They could thus spend the whole morning over their bathing; running races, playing games, and talking in the intervals when they were not in the water.

The river broadened out at one spot where there was a beautiful sandy bottom. Close to this place there were pools of water of varying depth. Some

of these were so deep that they kept deliciously cool all day, while others were so shallow that they soon grew warm as the day advanced. There were also a number of mimosa bushes on the bank, and these gave a very welcome shade during the heat of the day.

A whole crowd of excited boys and girls hurried along the pathway that led to the river; and as they ran along they chose a head-boy for the day, for they could do nothing without having their own special chief to decide all quarrels and keep order. There was a discussion whether Bombo or Hobohobo should be chosen. Bombo was a fat, jolly boy, with a very nice nature: he was very slow-witted, but being genial and good-natured was popular amongst the small children, to whom he was always very kind. The word Bombo means "Nasal Bones." The name had been given him because his nose was very big, just as such a boy is often nicknamed "Nosey" or "Proboscis" at an English school. Mahleka was very fond of Bombo, and urged strongly that he should be elected chief for the day, but Hobohobo was chosen. Now he was a big, lanky, coarse, clumsy sort of fellow, and being rather selfish and callous was apt to be a bully. However, he was chosen to act as chief for the day,

and felt a grudge against Mahleka for voting so loudly for Bombo.

As soon as the children reached the river they all began to wash themselves before starting their games. In olden days the natives had no soap, and it is said the first time they saw a man washing with soap they thought he was boiling, for they did not understand what the soap-suds were. It was very amusing to see the small children trying to wash themselves. When the chubby little fellow who had persuaded Mosele to carry him on her back down to the river so that he might enjoy the fun saw all the others washing, he stood in the water where it was about two inches deep and tried to wash himself. He only succeeded in covering his body from head to foot with mud. He thought he was washing himself beautifully, and appeared most grave as he called to Mosele to look at him. When she turned round she saw the comical-looking urchin smothered with mud. She hastened over her own washing and then cleaned him up, every now and then bursting with laughter as she thought of the mess he had made of himself.

When all had washed themselves, they began to splash about in the deeper water, some of the bigger lads diving very cleverly. The boys naturally began

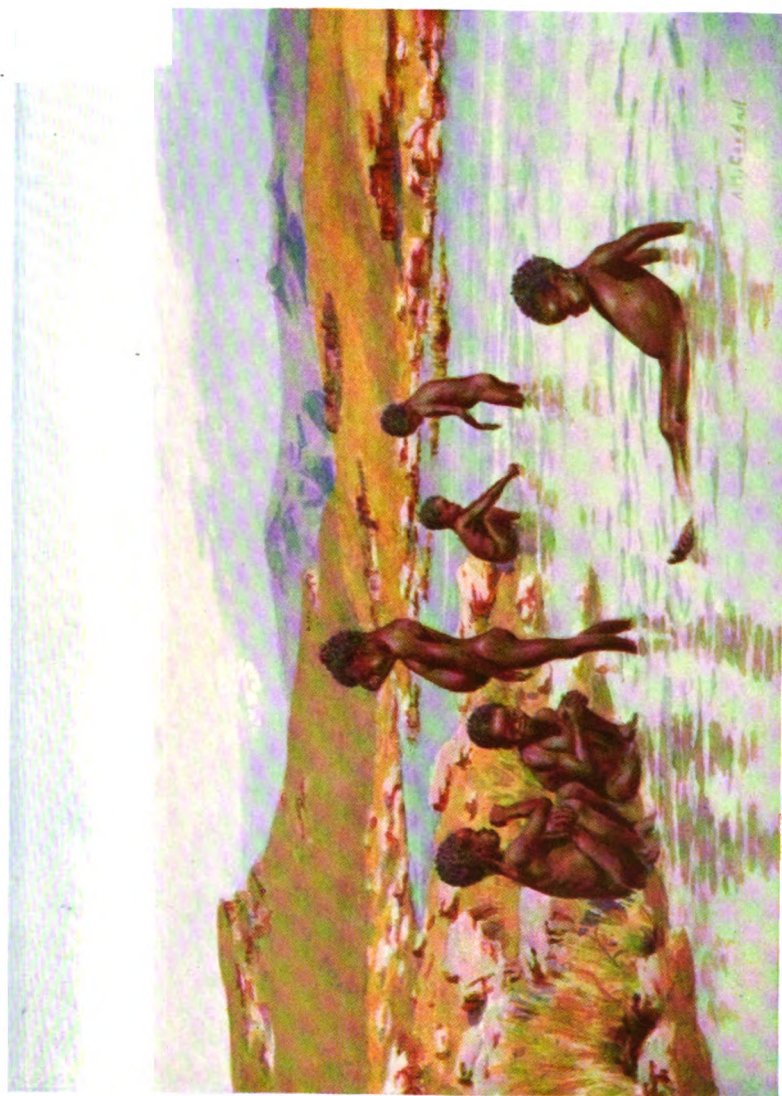
to "duck" one another—even the smallest taking the teasing in a good-natured way. None of them, however, "ducked" the girls, for it was not thought a manly thing to do. Before long all the bathers scrambled out of the water, and sat about on the sand so that their bodies might dry in the warm air and sunshine. Mahleka, who had forgotten all about the Heavenly Maidens, sidled up to the genial Bombo, and said, "I say, old Nasal Bones, make me a labyrinth. *Do* make me a labyrinth, for I haven't seen one for ever so long. I really haven't."

"Oh, you funny little Bull," said Bombo, "you are always wanting something; but never mind: I'll make you a labyrinth all for yourself."

Bombo excelled in making these mazes, and really liked to show off, for he had not much skill in anything else. He selected a nice flat piece of sand, and, kneeling down on one knee, reached out his right hand as far as he could, and with his first finger traced a wavy pattern in the sand. The labyrinth, or maze, was made in a few minutes; and then Mahleka tried to find his way between the waving lines. He grew quite eager as he found himself stopped again and again in his progress, and was trying for the fifth time to find his way in, when

Hobohobo came up and said in a careless way, "Oh, you can't get in, can't you? Well, I'll show you"; and with that he smudged the whole pattern with his great clumsy foot. The Bull suddenly called out with a pang, "Oh, you stupid!" and, looking round, saw it was the head-boy. He dared not finish his sentence, lest he should be made to do all sorts of unpleasant fag duty for the day. So he put his injured feelings on one side, and made Bombo promise to make another labyrinth later on when no one was looking. "Come along," shouted Hobohobo; "we're going to play a game."

The whole party hurried off to a bend of the river where the stream divided into two channels, and where there was a large dry patch of sand between the two streams of water. This was a favourite place for playing games. At first the boys ran races, balancing sticks on their noses; when tired of that they began to stand on their heads; then they raced with their legs in the air while they supported their bodies upside down on their hands. This game they called "Running with the horns," for the two legs in the air were supposed to represent the horns of oxen. Then they built mounds of sand, Hobohobo selecting the largest for himself. He swaggered about with a small white



BATHING.



THE LABYRINTH
(From "*The Natal Colonist*")

shield, the emblem of chieftainship. Tremendous fights with sticks ensued, and Hobohobo led a charmed life, because no one cared to strike, even in fun, a boy who was armed with the emblem of chieftainship.

When tired of these games, the boys and girls plunged into the river, or sat about in the hot pools. Mahleka was bathing where the water was nearly up to his chin, when Hobohobo began to tease and bully him. The big lout took hold of one of the Bull's legs and lifted it out of the water, high into the air, thus plunging Mahleka's head under the surface. After a short time Hobohobo let Mahleka's head come up from under the water, and the Bull, spluttering and gasping for breath, begged Hobohobo not to duck him like that again. But the big bully again lifted Mahleka's leg into the air, and down went the child's head once more under the water. This time Hobohobo kept the head under the water a longer time, and laughed as the bubbles of air rose to the surface. When he finally let the Bull's leg alone, he found that the child was unconscious. He became alarmed, and carried Mahleka to a shady spot on the bank, and began to rub and chafe his limbs. At first Hobohobo thought he had killed the child, and turned a ghastly greyish

colour from fright. He knew how serious would be the consequences of killing the future chief. Nokofa was very alarmed when she saw her sweetheart unconscious : she rubbed his legs, and begged him to speak. For a few minutes Mahleka lay quite still, and then, to every one's joy, he began to move his arms. As he opened his eyes and looked round Hobohobo and Nokofa breathed sighs of relief. The Bull of the Kraal made no complaints, for the future chief had to maintain his dignity : not a word was ever said to the parents, and in a short time the Bull was playing about as if nothing had happened, though he took good care to keep as far away as possible from Hobohobo. Bombo and Phiri both kept close to the Bull, and with this protection the child felt quite safe.

Time fails to tell of all the games they played ; "Touch," and "Hide and Seek," and "Wolf," and a number of other games known to English children followed one another in swift succession. There was great merriment over the game of "Horses," which they played in a very original fashion. Bombo stood upright while Phiri came behind him and placed his hands on Bombo's shoulders ; then Mahleka climbed up between the two boys and sat straddle-legged on Phiri's arms. Bombo and Phiri

formed the horse, while Mahleka pretended that he was a chief riding off to visit his friends. A number of "horses" were formed in this way, and races were held. They tried to see who could run the most quickly up the steep banks of the river, and when they were tired of this, different riders tried to pass one another rapidly, shaking hands when they met. Competitions were held to see who could cross the deep parts of the river most quickly, and several "horses" held a sham fight in the middle of the stream, the riders trying to pull one another off their mounts. The Bull was in tremendous form, and shouted as he managed to upset another boy. He quite forgot all about his recent trouble, and began to brag of the way he was getting the victory. But, as bad luck would have it, Hobo-hobo, who was riding a very big "horse," plunged into Bombo, and sent Mahleka splashing head-over-heels into the water. This was part of the game, of course, and when Mahleka came to the surface of the water, puffing and spluttering, it was clear he enjoyed the fun as much as any one else. All this time the girls had been sitting on the bank looking on, and whenever their favourite boys were successful, they called out with delight and clapped their hands; but when a girl saw her sweetheart pitched head-over-heels into the water, she screamed

at the top of her voice, and in alarm clutched hold of the first girl on whom she could lay her hands.

The next game was played on a number of sand-mounds. The girls were set to work to make a number of these heaps close together in a circle, each mound being about two feet high. Boys were told to go and sit on the little heaps, which had been damped with water so that the sand should be firm and well knit together. When Hobohobo gave the signal every boy had to raise himself on his two hands and jerk his body through the air in such a way as to come down in a sitting posture on the next sand-heap. Any one who failed to come down aright, or who touched the ground with his feet, was disqualified. All who were successful in the first round prepared for the next jump; and so the game went on till one boy was left victor. Phiri, who was the smartest of all the boys, won the game, and was told that his prize should consist of the best bird caught in the traps.

As soon as they were tired of playing on their sand-heaps Hobohobo decided that they should play *Qakela*. A boy was chosen by lot—in this case it was Bombo who was selected—and was sent far away out of hearing, accompanied by Mahleka, whose duty it was to be sure that Bombo could neither see nor hear what was being

done by the others. All the boys and girls sat in a circle, and each one put something in his or her right hand, choosing some such thing as a mealie grain, or a stone, or a bean. When Bombo and Mahleka were called back, Bombo was placed in the centre of the circle. "Now, old Nasal Bones," said Hobohobo, "you've got to guess what we have got in our hands." Each player then held out his or her clenched right hand, while Bombo picked out any hand he chose so as to guess what it contained. After looking all round in a very slow and leisurely manner, Bombo selected Mosele's right hand. He then said, "You've got either a stone or a thorn in your hand ; I'm not sure which, but I think it's a stone."

Mosele opened her hand with great delight, telling Bombo he was quite wrong, and showing him a small bead-necklace, which she had taken off her neck. Everybody laughed at Bombo for not having noticed that the girl was not wearing this ornament. Bombo, nothing daunted, chose hand after hand, still maintaining that every one had got a stone in their fist. He felt sure some one would have a stone, and so thought the best and easiest way was to go on guessing nothing but stones. Hobohobo, who, as usual, had been laughing at

Bombo's stupidity, felt rather uncomfortable when Bombo picked out his hand, and said that it contained a stone. He was right this time, and everybody laughed at Hobohobo for being found out by the boy he chaffed for being dull-witted. It was now Hobohobo's turn to be led away into the distance, while Bombo sat in the circle.

When the game was finished Mosele suggested that they should play *Gurgwe*, or the Caterpillar. It was done thus: A boy knelt down on his hands and knees, while two children sat down on the ground, one on either side of him, facing one another. They then put their legs over the back of the boy who was kneeling, and grasped one another firmly by the hand. The kneeling boy had then to rise with these two clinging to his back, and as he walked away with them, all the others sang out, "The caterpillar and his child; the caterpillar and his child." This is the tune they sang:



Any one failing to lift the two children, or to walk away with them, was laughed at for being weak and feeble. It was a funny sight to see half

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a dozen of these caterpillars walking about at the edge of the river, knocking into one another, and falling with a great splash into the water, amidst peals of laughter from the onlookers.

When they had been playing this game for some time Mahleka begged them all to play *Gambekambe*. All sat down upon the ground close together, with their legs stretched out in front of them, while Phiri pretended to be the father of these children, saying he had been out looking for meat and had brought some home for his family. As he said this he produced some small sticks, which he declared were pieces of meat. He stuck the small pieces of wood between the toes of all the boys and girls, and, pretending to be sleepy, lay down across their legs. As soon as he began to snore in his sleep each child pulled out the piece of wood between its toes and prodded the sleeping Phiri. He then woke up and scratched himself, pretending that the ants were biting him. "Dear me," said he, "my sleeping-mat is very full of ants; I must shake them out." He then lifted up the legs (which formed the sleeping-mat) one by one, so as to shake the ants out of them. When he had done this he lay down again and went to sleep. But no sooner did he begin to snore than the children

began to prod him again. This time they did it more vigorously, so that Phiri got up and shook the legs one by one very furiously, and as he did so he sang his song :

It is gambekambe,
It is a tree that is eaten ;
It is eaten mangoingoi.
Whose is the mangoingoi ?
It belongs to Beetle-knife.
We have seen you,
Nyamutshia ;
You have a burn on your back :
There it is, there it is, nyamutshia.

Ra a ga - mbe ka - mbe Ra a mu ti

u no rgyi - wa U no rgyi - wa ma - ngoi - ngoi.

Ma ngoi - ngo - i nga - a - ni nga a

mu - tshu-tshu - ba - nga ta zo ku o na nya -

. mu - tshi - a u ne - mba - re pa mu - tsa -

. na tshi - a tshi - a nya - mu - tshi - a.

Many of the words in this song have no meaning, but were invented because of their funny sound.

As soon as the game was over Phiri remarked that the shadows were getting very short, and that it must be time for dinner. Since all the children were very hungry, they were glad to run off home. But before they left they went to see whether any birds had been caught in the traps. To their disappointment they found them all empty. No doubt they had made so much noise while playing their games that they had frightened away all the birds.

CHAPTER VII

DOLLS

WHEN they arrived at the kraal the children found that some very nice tit-bits had already been cooked for them, so as to make up for the way they had been teased about Nomgogwana the day before. All through the meal they discussed how many dolls they would make during the afternoon, and what they would do with them. Tiye, who, by the way, was Bombo's sweetheart, was very good at making ornaments, and said that an elder sister of hers had given her some coloured beads, which would do nicely for making the wedding ornaments. While she and Phiri were discussing the arrangements for the afternoon, the Chief interrupted them by saying, "Don't forget, Mahleka, that you have got to have your head shaved before you go to play at dolls." The cutting of the hair is a very important event amongst black people. In the case of a chief the greatest care has to be taken. A special

doctor keeps an assegai for shaving the chief's head, and the blade is not allowed to be used for anything else, lest the chief should be bewitched through evil charms worked on it. Before it is used it has to be washed in special medicine, and after the chief's hair has been cut the assegai-blade has to be put away carefully in the hut of the first wife the chief married, for all the medicines are kept in her hut. Mahleka, being a young chief, had his hair cut by the special doctor. In the case of ordinary people the hair is frequently cut with a broken piece of glass, or with any little odd piece of iron that may be handy. In some tribes all the hair is shaved from the head, while in others certain patches are left unshaved. The Pondos cut the hair of the children in such a way that they look like poodle dogs, while in other tribes the people shave the entire head, or may leave unshaved just a small ring of hair or a little tuft over the forehead, or perhaps just a ridge running down the centre of the skull, so that it looks something like a cock's comb. Occasionally a boy will beg to have two patches of hair left in the front of his head, and then will get his sister to plait these hairs so as to form two small horns.

Mahleka had all his head shaved, without soap,

and was very particular to see that all the hair that was shaved off was buried in the soil at the edge of the cattle kraal. He did this because he thought that if it was placed in damp soil it would continue to grow, and that this continued growth would help him to grow big and strong.

As soon as Mahleka's head was shaved he joined a group of merry boys and girls, who ran off into the bush where they were going to play at dolls. Phiri was going to be the head-boy for the afternoon, as he was very good at modelling in clay. He took a large lump of earth, damped it with water, and pounded it up till he was tired; he then made Bombo pound it till he was tired. When the clay was in good condition Phiri broke off a number of lumps, giving some to the boys and some to the girls, while he himself began to make all sorts of animals. First of all he made an ox, with sprawling legs and great big horns, which were longer than the animal's body. Then he made horses and sheep, and goats, and men, scorning to make girl-dolls or any of the things that women use. He told Tiye to make girl-dolls, grinding-stones, water-pots, cooking-vessels, and other household utensils. Tiye was as clever with her fingers as was Phiri, but she did not make

oxen or men, because it is not thought right that women should have anything to do with oxen even in play.

Nokofa had carried off with her from the hut the cob of a mealie, and, using this to serve as the body of a doll, she wrapped round it a little piece of material torn from off her blanket. She then pulled a few of the fibres out of her blanket and fastened them on to the head of the mealie-cob, giving it thus a shock of hair. All the girls were delighted with this doll, which seemed to them exactly as if it were alive.

Black children have the firmest belief that their dolls really are alive. Nokofa told Mahleka that her mealie-cob doll could really eat and sleep and talk. But Phiri began to tease her by saying, "Oh, your stupid girl-dolls are only made of mealies or of clay; *they* are not alive. If any one were to break *your* dolls they would find nothing inside them." Nokofa indignantly declared, "Our babies really *are* alive," but feeling some slight misgiving on the subject she turned the tables on Phiri and retorted, "Well, supposing our dolls are only made of clay or mealie-cobs, *your* old oxen that you are so proud about are no better; the oxen and horses *you* play with are made just like our dolls, and if

ours only contain clay, so do *yours*. So there! Ya! ya!" The boys felt very much hurt when spoken to like this, and indignantly denied the charge. They said their oxen really were alive, and that if they were broken they would bleed. They then added that their oxen anyhow had real horns; but feeling themselves on delicate ground, and not wishing to have any more questions asked, they very wisely changed the subject.

The girls set to work to make a number of bangles, necklaces, anklets, as well as some girdles of beadwork to go round the waists of their dolls. Some of them made these bangles of grass, plaiting the different strands most carefully, and finishing off the circle so well that it would have been difficult to detect the join. Other girls made bangles of beadwork, choosing the most beautiful colours, and in no case selecting gaudy tints. They seemed specially fond of art greens, Indian reds, and turquoise blue, skilfully combining these tints with black and white beads. The bangles were very strong, and did not break as do the small bead-rings white children make with ordinary sewing cotton. When all the bangles and ornaments were finished the dolls were dressed up ready for the games that were to be played, some

having quaint little baby-dolls strapped on to their backs.

When Phiri had made a number of clay oxen he set to work to make a doll's house. He sent all the boys and girls to hunt for suitable sticks and grass, and then built the neatest little hut, about a foot high. When black children play at dolls they like to do everything as properly as they can, and so when Phiri had finished building the framework of the hut (which is regarded as the work of men) he told Tiye that it was her turn now to plaster the mud on the sides and to fix the thatch on the roof (for that is women's work). As soon as the doll's hut was plastered the boys set to work to make a cattle-kraal for their clay oxen. When it was finished the boys put the oxen inside it, and then said everything was ready for the games that were to be played.

The first thing to be done was to feed the dolls, for to black people eating is the most important thing in life. The boys therefore wanted to begin feeding their boy-dolls at once, but Tiye objected and said, "It is just like you boys to forget that the grain has to be ground and cooked before it can be eaten. Forsooth! when were men content to eat mealies before they had been ground and cooked?"

She therefore brought out some of the toy grinding-stones she had made, and took a handful of earth, pretending that it was grain; she then ground it up, singing the grinding-songs that the women use in real life. As all the girls ground the earth they sang: "The corn of the old women, the corn of the old women, we will take the chaff from it." The tune they chanted ran like this:



Some of the girls sang the air while the rest hummed this accompaniment:



After singing this for some time they grew tired of it, and sang another grinding-song: "Mamohera has eaten up the land with the chaff; Mamohera has eaten up the land with the chaff."



Mamohera is supposed to have been an old woman who lived long ago, and who was so selfish that she

used to grind her corn in secret so that she might keep it for herself. This is thought so very evil that her name has gone down to posterity as a warning to all selfish women.

As soon as the pretence-grain had been ground it had to be cooked, and so Tiye brought out her clay imitations of Kafir-pots, which were placed over real grass fires. When the food was cooked all the dolls were brought to be fed. Mahleka was very particular in insisting that the dolls should behave properly, and there was first of all a discussion as to whether or not some of the doll-children should be sent off to call Nomgogwana. It was universally decided that they certainly should be sent to fetch him, for everybody thought that they would thus relieve their feelings, and tease the dolls even as they had been teased themselves by their parents. Three or four dolls were therefore put away in the bush until the meal was finished, and were then brought back, only to be told by Mahleka, "You know we are very sorry, but Nomgogwana came soon after you went away, and we didn't like to make him angry, so all the food has been eaten."

Black people are very polite though they differ from us in many of their ideas. There are a great

many rules with regard to the eating of food. Black children are not told to take their elbows off the table, nor are they warned that they must not touch the food with their hands, for they have neither tables nor forks ; but they are told that it is very base to eat food in secret without sharing it with others. No child may help itself from the pot, but must take what it is given by its mother. Mahleka impressed all these things on the dolls, and told them that in holding the spoon the hand should be placed with the palm upwards (it is just the opposite in the case of white children), and that the handle should be grasped with the whole hand, the little finger being next to the spoon end. When Mahleka had impressed these rules on the dolls he told them that they must not pick up the crumbs, because if they did that they would grow up very poor ; he added that they must not smack their lips when they were eating, or they would attract the dogs, who would snatch the food from them.

As soon as the meal was over the whole party began to play at "traders," just as English children play at "shops." A boy pretended to be a white trader, while the others brought him oxen, or goats, or hens, or even mealies, all of which were represented in clay. But none of the boys would play

with the girl-dolls, nor would they allow the girls to play with the boy-dolls or with the oxen. When tired of "traders" they began to play the greatest of all doll-games, namely, a doll-marriage.

Mahleka was going to marry one of his boy-dolls (which he had fastened on to a clay horse) to the mealie-cob doll made by Tiye.

The whole ceremony from the beginning of the courting right up to the marriage feast was imitated. First of all the boy-doll went to the hut of the girl-doll, and gave her a present; after some time the boy-doll sent a friend to bargain with the father of the girl-doll; and at last it was settled that since the boy-doll was a chief's son he must pay fifteen head of cattle for his wife. It was found that there were not so many clay oxen, and so some more had to be made. Since one of the oxen made by Bombo had only three legs, Mahleka was very indignant, and said in scorn, "Stupid old Nasal Bones! Whoever heard of anybody buying a wife with an old cow that had only three legs!" He refused to send the oxen to the father of the girl-doll until all the fifteen oxen were examined and found to be perfect and complete. Phiri therefore had to make an extra leg for Bombo's ox, and it was so difficult to fix the leg on aright that Mahleka was

very uncertain whether the ox had four legs and one tail or three legs and two tails. However, as Phiri told him it was all right he decided that the second tail should be called a leg. The fifteen clay oxen were at last paid over to the father of the girl-doll, and then everybody got ready for the wedding dance.

The most important part of this event was the killing of an ox for the feast. Phiri was very much disinclined to kill one of the clay oxen, and so he said he thought it would do quite well to kill one of Mosele's girl-dolls instead. He picked out Mosele, as he knew she was so good-tempered that she would more likely give in than any other girl. However, she showed unexpected firmness, and cried out that she wouldn't on any account let one of her dolls be killed, and, turning the tables on the boys, hinted that this would be a good opportunity for testing whether the oxen really had blood inside them as the boys declared they had. Of course all the girls insisted on this, and so did Mahleka, who was most anxious that an ox should be killed, for he said people didn't eat human beings at weddings except when cannibals were being married. So it was decided that Bombo must kill one of the oxen. This he was on the point of doing

before all the girls. Phiri, however, was quite a match for Mosele, and cunningly maintained that women were never allowed to be present when an ox was being killed. He therefore urged that the ox should be taken into the bush and killed there. Bombo was so dull that at first he did not see the point of Phiri's advice; but as he was nudged by all the other boys he took the ox into the bush, all the others following him. After a time they returned with the broken ox. Phiri maintained that there was quite a lot of blood inside it when Bombo killed it; and the girls, who had not been present when it was broken, could not do more than say they did not believe it. Mahleka was greatly excited, and went up to his sweetheart Nokofa and told her in his usual loud whisper that he really did believe that there was a little drop of blood seen when the ox was killed—"or at least something very like blood," he added as an after-thought.

The feast was then held, and the dolls were made to dance, Nokofa, Mosele, and Tiye all playing on little musical instruments between the dances. It must not be thought that these musical instruments were very grand, for they were made by stretching strings of grass across

bows, which were fastened to gourds. The string was hit with a small piece of reed, and merely gave out a thin, feeble, tinkling sound ; but since black children love rhythm more than tune or melody they thought that these simple musical instruments made the most delightful music. When the wedding-dances were all finished, the newly married doll-bride was led off, just as in real life, to the new hut of her husband, and was lectured about her duties of submission to her lord and master.

When the doll-wedding was over, the children saw that the shadows were getting very long, and so they knew it was time to go home for supper. A few dolls were left in the doll's hut, for the children frequently leave their dolls and oxen in the *veld* for days together. The girls picked up the rest and placed them on their backs, just as if the dolls had been real babies, and then they hurried off home. Phiri and Mahleka, however, went off to visit their traps, the one hoping to find some birds to give to the old grandmother, so as to put her in a good temper, and the other hoping to find a Heavenly Maiden caught. When they reached the traps they found that a beautiful pigeon was caught in one of the stone traps, its head being crushed by the falling stone.

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“Do you think Heavenly Maidens have feathers like these, Phiri?” said Mahleka, as he looked at the beautiful colours glistening on the neck of the bird. “You are so clever, Phiri, you ought to know.”

Phiri thought for a few moments, and saw that it would never do to admit ignorance, so he said, “I think some of them have feathers like these, but most of them have wings like butterflies or else like locusts.” The locusts in South Africa sometimes have gorgeous red and green-black wings, while many of the butterflies have wings of the most wonderful colours, one of the most beautiful kinds being a swallow-tail butterfly, with the richest black and green velvet-like patches of colour. Mahleka thought he would give anything in the world to see Heavenly Maidens flying about with such wings; and all the way home he kept pestering Phiri with a string of questions. When they reached the kraal, they found that Mosele had given the grandmother a handful of salt. The old woman was therefore in a very good humour, and was delighted when Mahleka ran up and kissed her, placing an enormous pigeon in her lap.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAGIC EGG : THE FAIRY-TALE FOR THE SECOND NIGHT

SINCE supper was not ready, there was nothing better to do than to listen to a young mother who was singing to her baby. When a black mother wishes to quiet her infant she sometimes takes hold of each finger or toe in succession, calling out its name as she gives it a squeeze, somewhat as English mothers do when they tell the story of "Mrs. Piggy went to market." Sometimes they merely sing the same words to each finger, saying, "One, one, the bamboo with the knuckles." The word used for knuckle is a very funny one, and seems as if it had a number of knobs or joints in it. This is the tune they sing :



But the young mother was singing a rather different song to her baby. Picking up the little-finger of the left hand, she sang, "This is *cikicane*, the little one." When the little-finger is placed into the ear and shaken about, it makes a very funny noise, which the Kafirs thinks sounds like the word *cikicane*. Therefore the mother said, "This is the little-finger that makes the noise *cikicane*." She then took hold of the ring-finger, singing out, "This is the crooked one." Then, touching the middle-finger, she squeezed it and said, "This is *the* finger"—that is to say, the important one. Gently pinching the next finger, she added, "This is the small finger"; while, pressing the thumb, she gave it a kiss, and said, "This is the small finger of the chief." Having finished the fingers of the left hand, she turned to the right, and, holding the thumb, she sang, "This is the finger of the dregs of the beer." Then, taking the index-finger, she said, "This is the one that scrapes away the dregs of the beer." As she pressed the middle finger she called out, "This is the finger of the sweet-scented wood." The ring-finger she named, "This is the one that has passed the examination." Finally, taking up the little-finger, she sang, "And this is the little porridge-eater." Here is the music of the finger-song:



By the time the song had been repeated two or three times the food was ready, and the ravenous children might well have been nicknamed "Little-Fingers," for they were indeed Porridge-Eaters. The amount they ate was something astonishing. The grandmother enjoyed her pigeon immensely, for Mosele—thoughtful alike for young and old—had cooked it beautifully.

By the time the evening meal was over, the old grandmother felt in such a pleasant mood that she did not wait to be pressed, but of her own accord offered to tell a fairy-tale. She asked them whether they would like to hear the tale of Skin-

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sore and the Magic Bones, or of Skin-sore and the Egg, or of Skin-sore and the White Bird. Mahleka clamoured for Skin-sore and the Egg, while others clamoured for different stories. But since it was the Bull who had brought the bird for his grandmother to eat, and since Mosele, who had given her the salt, also wanted to hear about the Magic Egg, the old woman decided in favour of the story the Bull wished to hear—merely telling him that if she told the story he wanted he must promise not to interrupt the tale with questions. When the promise had been given, the children all cried out, “Begin, Grandmother; begin, Grandmother: we won’t let him ask any questions.” So the old lady cleared her throat and told her story.

SKIN-SORE AND THE EGG

Once upon a time a man had a number of children, the youngest of whom was called little Skin-sore. They lived thus a number of years, till the father died. Then the children said, “Father is dead; let us divide among ourselves his wives. The eldest of us, he it is who is the heir.”

So they divided amongst themselves the women,

the goats, the cattle, the dogs, and the fowls. Little Skin-sore is told, "You too must have a wife."

But he refused, saying, "I don't want a wife."

"Very well then, do you want cattle?"

"No, I don't want cattle," said he; "I only want that old ox-skin that is in the cattle-kraal over there, and that is trodden under the feet of the cattle."

"But what," said they, "do you want with a skin which has not been suppled? Is it better than a wife?"

"That's what I want," urged the child.

"No, no, don't take a skin; take some of your father's things."

"No," said Skin-sore, "I don't want any goods."

"Very well," they said, "take the skin for yourself."

"Please get it for me," requested the child; "I don't like to take it of myself."

So they took the skin and gave it to the child.

"I want one of those little hen's eggs," said the boy.

"But what can you want to do with it?" said the people.

"I want it ; that's part of my father's property too, is it not ?"

"What ?" said the people ; "is your father's property an egg ?"

"Yes," said the child.

So they took that egg and gave it to the boy.

"Many thanks," said he ; "and now farewell."

"Whither are you going ?" asked the people.

"I am just going throughout the bush-country over there," said he.

"What will you eat there ?" asked they.

"Well," said the boy, "if I die, I die ; didn't my father die ?"

"But if your father died is that any reason why you should die ?"

"If I die, I die," replied the boy.

"Very well, be off with you," said the people.

So off he went with his skin and egg, and walked for a couple of days. Coming to a big flat rock, he sat down, and produced his egg ; and there he slept, wrapping himself up in his skin. Up came a man, who asked, "Why are you sitting here ?"

"Oh," said the boy, "I was just sitting."

"But what do you wrap in ?"

"I wrap in my skin," said the child.

"Why do you wrap in a skin that is all covered with mud?" asked the man.

"That's the skin I like to wrap in. But, I say, my good man, why don't you stop here, and I'll make you my son-in-law?"

"I be made a son-in-law by you!" said the man.

"Well, why shouldn't I make you my son-in-law?" said the boy.

"What?" said the man; "I be made a son-in-law by a boy who has only a skin to cover him at night!"

"Well, can't a man who has nothing but a skin to cover him make anybody his son-in-law?" said Skin-sore.

"No, certainly not; are you a chief that you can do so?"

"Well, stop here," said the boy, "and to-morrow at dawn I shall sing my song; at dawn as the sun comes forth. Then, O man, please answer to my song, that I may sing it nicely. If you see my egg swell out do not run away."

"No," said the man, "I won't run away."

"Well, please answer and say, 'Ndinde, ndinde,'" said Skin-sore.

So the youngster began to sing :

"Zirire zairi wo-e."

"Ndinde, ndinde," replied the man.

Then the child sang :

"My elder brothers have taken the flock of goats,

["Ndinde, Ndinde."]

And have given me only a skin ; ["Ndinde, Ndinde."]

They have taken all the women, ["Ndinde, Ndinde."]

And given me only an egg." ["Ndinde, Ndinde."]

Ah ! the egg begins to swell. Pu ! it bursts. Out come people from the egg—and goats, dogs, cattle, fowls, sheep—E ! at last there come out huts too ! Then the child took his sleeping-sack, and, wrapping himself in it, lay down to sleep. The people who were in this new-made kraal said, "Let us go out and greet the chief who raised us up."

So they went out, every one of them, the old people, women, and little children ; all gathered together around the boy and saluted him, the women raising their shrill cry and the beggars dancing. Then the boy awoke and acknowledged their homage, saying, "Yes, my people, I raised you up because I was given only a skin and an egg by my elder brothers. And then they wanted

to give me a wife, but I said that I didn't want a wife, and asked for a skin and an egg; that's why I came here and then raised you up. Now, my sons-in-law, be strong and work well in the lands."

"We will," they said.

In course of time the elder brothers of Skin-sore heard that the child had become a great chief.

"Let us go and get possession of his whole kraal," said they, "and leave him a mere beggar."

So the elder brothers collected an army and went to Skin-sore's kraal. On arriving there they said, "Give us the whole of your kraal, or else we will kill all your people."

"You'll not take my kraal," said he; "if you try to do so we shall fight."

"Well," said the brothers, "we shall take it."

So Skin-sore called out all his army, and they had a fight. Then Skin-sore called to his sons, "Stop here and leave me to fight with them alone with my own spear."

"What?" said they; "will you fight with the lot of them all by yourself?"

"Yes," said he, "that's what I mean to do."

So they started fighting, and the elder brothers were just thrust through by Skin-sore, and were wiped off the face of the earth.

"If you want any more," said Skin-sore, "come on."

So again they made the attempt and engaged in conflict with him. Then said Skin-sore to the people, "Go to their kraal where the women are, and take the whole kraal."

This they did, and brought everything to him.

"I am now chief," said the lad, "and the land is mine."

No sooner had the grandmother finished her tale than the Bull burst out into a whole string of questions. He had kept them pent up within himself as the story was being told, and now at length he could talk without breaking his promise. What he especially "wanted to know" was how Skin-sore had married a number of Heavenly Maidens the night before, and yet in the story just told to them seemed to start with no wives. One child suggested that the maidens had flown back to Heaven, for their wings must have grown. This explanation did not fully satisfy Mahleka, though he made a mental note to be sure and watch the Heavenly Maidens when he caught them, and to see whether the wings grew again or not. One of the girls said that perhaps the maidens had been

badly treated and had run off home. But the grandmother gave the most satisfactory explanation: she said that probably some one worked magic, and so unmarried Skin-sore. Not a few of the Kafir fairy-tales describe how birds or other animals, when they have a spite against men or women, go into the fields that have been hoed during the day and sing a magic song, saying, "Fields, be unhoed," and in a twinkling all the labour of the day is undone, so that when the people visit the fields next morning it looks as if the women had done no hoeing on the previous day. In similar fashion the person who uses magic can go to a hut the men are building and can say, "Hut, be unbuilt," and lo! in a twinkling the toil of the whole day is undone, and the very wattles and mud vanish. The old grandmother said that if that might happen to huts and gardens—and every Kafir knew it might—then why should not some enemy use magic and say to Skin-sore and his Heavenly Maidens, "Be unmarried," and thus cause Skin-sore to start afresh next day to hunt for some wives?

Having given this explanation, she added, "And now off to bed with you all this very minute!"

THE THIRD DAY

CHAPTER IX

THE NEW BLACK BABY

ALL the sleepers were awakened at the first streak of dawn by Mahleka, who shouted out in a very impatient way, "I want to kno-o-ow." Having made this most characteristic remark, he stopped abruptly, and looked most comical as he thought for a few moments as if trying to remember what he wanted to ask. He then bent over and pinched his mother, saying, "Mame! Ma-a-a-a-me! are we the same people to-day that we were yesterday? I want to know." The question was so unexpected and so unusual that all the people, even the sleepest, burst out laughing. Mahleka's mother did not know what to say, and suggested that he had better go to sleep again. But he was not to be put off thus, and so turned to his father and said, "Baba! I want to kno-o-o-w." As a rule

black people do not like children to keep on asking questions, but the Bull of the Kraal was a privileged person and might do what others might not. The Chief therefore took Mahleka in his arms, stroked his limbs, and said, "E ! but you'll be a clever man one day if you go on asking questions like this so early in the morning. But do you know what my grandfather told me once? He said that no clever man ever licked his own back." Mahleka looked very grave when he heard this, and evidently doubted the truth of the proverb, for he put his tongue out as far as ever he could, and bent his head round to reach his own back, so as to prove to everybody in the hut that he really was a clever fellow. He did this in such a comical way, looking so serious all the time, that all the men and women simply rolled on the floor with laughter, very much to the surprise of Mahleka, who stood up looking at them with his tongue still out of his mouth.

The Chief went to the door, and, seeing that it was drizzling and that there was a mist all over the country, turned to all the people and told them the ground was wet with "fly's spittle," which is the name the Kafirs give to drizzle. The children were delighted when they heard this, and did not

cry out, "Rain, rain, go to Spain," but, "Mankokotsana, bring us rain," Mankokotsana being a mythical person with power over the rain.

There are many reasons why black boys and girls like the rain, the principal one being that in South Africa there is such endless sunshine that it is quite a relief to get some rain; consequently the rain-doctors are men very much valued, for the people think that these men know how to make very strong medicine (out of porpoises) which compels the clouds to rain upon the earth. Another reason is that they think that if they run about in the rain they will grow tall. Consequently mothers let their small babies sit on the doorstep and paddle their feet in the mud, while they tell the bigger ones to run about naked in the rain calling out, "Cabelele, Cabelele, Cabelele." No sooner had the boys and girls heard that it was drizzling than they ran out into the open air, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves, taking special delight in wading through the tall wet grass, which reached to their elbows. Amongst the Kafirs old aunts never lecture children about changing damp stockings, because in the first place every aunt is married and has her own family to look after, and consequently never interferes with her

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nephews and nieces; and, secondly, because the people do not wear stockings.

The desire to grow big leads to several customs besides those already mentioned. When a mother lifts up her sleeping baby she holds it under the arm-pits, letting the feet hang down, and then pulls the legs gently, so as to prevent them from shrinking. In some tribes no boy will allow another to jump over his head if he can help it, for it is supposed to hinder his growth. In such tribes the lads do not play leap-frog, though they love the game in tribes where the belief is not held.

It had been decided that a certain health-giving charm should be performed on this day, for there had been an epidemic of measles in some of the neighbouring kraals. A number of mothers went to a sandy patch by the edge of the river, each carrying a small baby on her back, while some of the bigger boys walked along in company with their fathers. The Chief took Mahleka with him, and when he had arrived at a suitable spot told the women to dig a number of deep holes in the sand. Then everybody took his or her own child and put it in the hole, covering the body up to the neck with sand. There was much crying amongst the terrified youngsters, as might have been expected,

but for once the parents had to seem hard-hearted. They all went away to a distance, wailing as they went, and taking great care not to look back even when the children screamed most piteously; for they thought that if they were to look back not only would the charm be spoiled, but that evil would befall the children throughout life. When the parents had left them for a sufficient time in this half-buried condition they returned and dug them out of the sand, caressing them most affectionately and telling them that now they would not be sick for another whole year, and that the many evils that would otherwise have assailed them were now warded off. As the people were walking back home the rain began to clear up, for a strong wind had risen. They saw a most beautiful rainbow, and of course Mahleka "wanted to know" all about it. However, the wind was so strong that his father told him that he must wait till another time, as it was difficult to talk.

When they reached home they found everybody in the kraal very excited. Nokofa ran out to meet Mahleka and told him that he had got a new dear little baby-sister, and that if he would be a very good boy and not make a noise he would be allowed to nurse it for a few minutes. Of course

he wanted to know a hundred things all at once, the first being the baby's name. He turned to his father, who replied that of course the name would be *Moya*, which is the word for wind, for black people frequently call children after some event.

There are several things to be considered in naming a child. Sometimes a baby is called after another person as a compliment to him, just as is the case in England. For example, the Kafirs frequently call the baby by the birth-name (which corresponds to our Christian name) of the grandfather. Sometimes it is given a name on account of its appearance; thus a great big baby-boy who looked very strong might be called after some powerful man, just as English schoolboys nickname a strong boy Samson, or Goliath, or Hercules. Sometimes it is named in accordance with the character it is hoped it will develop, for the people think that there is great power in a name. Black people, as we have seen in the case of Mosele, occasionally give the child a very nasty name when they wish to break what they think is an evil spell. But the commonest method of all amongst black people is to call an infant after any special event that has just happened, much as we might call a boy Guy or Noel if he happened to be

born on the 5th of November or on Christmas Day. Thus in Basutoland if a girl were born during very wet weather she would probably be called *Puleng* (that is to say, Rain); if there were great sorrow in the kraal at the time of the birth she might be called *Mokho*, which means a Tear; if an uncle had been slighted at the wedding feast he might turn up on the day of birth and insist that the baby should be called *Ntebaleng*, or Forget Me, just to punish the people for the way in which they had neglected him. For somewhat the same sort of reason Mahleka's sweetheart had been called *Nokofa*, or Mother of Death, because one of her family happened to be dying when she was born. Since the wind had risen very suddenly in the middle of the morning, Mahleka's little sister was to be called *Moya*, or Wind.

As soon as they reached the kraal they all hastened to empty their bags, so as to hunt for presents for the new baby, each child selecting its favourite doll, or bangle, or pretty stone, or clay ox, or knob-kerrie, or some old piece of food, and taking care to choose the thing it valued most. They then hurried to the mother's hut, but were not allowed to enter it until the diviner had doctored them.

The doctor was busy in the hut preparing medicines for the baby. He mixed together some powdered meteorite, the powdered whiskers of a tiger, some grated claws of a lion, and the minced-up skin of a lizard. He then held the baby high over the fire, threw a little of this extraordinary mixture of medicines into the flames, and "washed" the baby in the smoke. The meteorite, being a very hard substance, was supposed to make the baby's skull strong, and its body firm and vigorous; the tiger's whiskers were used so as to render the child cunning, quick, and agile; the claws of the lion were thought to make the infant's heart very strong and brave. When the diviner had thoroughly doctored the baby, he gave it back to its mother, and went outside the hut to make a fire close to the door, throwing into the flames some powerful medicines. He waited till the fire had died out, and then made the visitors come up one by one and rub their feet in the ashes. This was done to destroy any evil influences that might have clung to the feet of the visitors. Black people think that witches and wizards place evil medicines on the footpaths, and that any one accidentally touching the medicine with their feet would carry the infection to the baby. When the boys and girls

had thoroughly scraped their feet in the ashes they were told to chew some special medicines so as to "doctor" their breath, and were then allowed to pass into the hut.

They kissed the infant and smothered it with caresses, calling it all the pretty and affectionate names they could remember. Mahleka danced with glee in front of it, and pointed out to everybody, and especially to Nokofa, the daintiness of the fingers and toes, the bright little eyes, the delicate ears; and he told her in a patronising and knowing way that it was the most beautiful baby that had ever been born. He then presented it with the one thing in the whole world that he thought it would like best—a dirty old tobacco-pipe. For some time he had been longing to have one of these pipes, and only a week before had pestered one of his big brothers to give him one. He felt quite sure the infant would like the thing he liked, and that is why he gave his little baby sister such an extraordinary present. He then begged to be allowed to nurse the infant just for a few minutes, and told Nokofa to stand by in case he let it fall. When he had given the baby back to his mother he pestered her with questions, and above all wanted to know how soon he might

show his baby sister how to make bird-traps. He seemed to think she would be able to make them the next day, and was astonished when he found that it would be years before she could do such a thing.

When Mahleka had finished his questions, the others came up to offer their presents. Mosele gave the baby some sugar-cane, Nokofa offered it a bead necklace and bangle, Tiye presented a doll, Phiri placed in its hands a pretty stone that he had found in the river-bed, Makiwane gave it some dried meat, and Bombo came up last and gave the baby a stick.

If Mahleka had had a small sister, the grandmother would have placed the baby in the arms of the tiny girl, and should the little nurse have shown any signs of jealousy towards her infant sister she would have been taken out of the hut and not allowed to see the baby again for three days. Then the mother would have placed the baby on the ground and taken its sister into her arms and fondled her into a good humour. She would then have taken up the baby and placed it alongside of the little girl, cuddling the two children together. During all the three days the poor infant would have been fed on sour milk, for it is

thought that sweet milk makes a baby sick so long as the elder sister is jealous.

It was necessary that the mother should smoke her baby in the fire, so as to complete all the charms against witches and wizards. She has to do this all alone, for no one is allowed even to peep into the hut while the baby is being smoked, lest the charm should be spoilt. The children were therefore all packed off to their grandmother's hut for the rest of the morning. The mother first carefully closed up the door of the hut, so that no one could peep through it; then she took some chips of sweet-scented wood that smells very much like cedar pencils, and sprinkled them on to the fire. At once the hut was filled with strong-smelling smoke. The mother began to sing a chant as she "washed" the poor little infant in the smoke, and each time it cried out she said, "There goes the wizard." She doctored the baby in this fashion daily for several weeks, so as to be sure that the smoke had thoroughly penetrated the infant's body, for the doctor had told her that there were many wicked fairies which above all things loved to injure small babies; but if there is one thing in the world which these horrid creatures hate it is the smell of this strong and pungent smoke. So when they

see a new-born baby they hasten up to bewitch it, but, smelling the nasty smoke, fly away in horror, thinking that the smell of the baby is too disgusting for words.

While the mother was performing this ceremony Mahleka and a dozen other children sat in the grandmother's hut asking her questions. The Chief wanted a clever boy to take a message to the new baby's uncle, so he told one of the men to send Phiri to him, saying, "The boy's mind is in his nails." That is the way in which a black man describes a clever boy, and it reminds one of the way white people say of a person who knows a subject well, "He has it at his fingers' ends." Before Phiri went off with the message, he ran away to a spot agreed upon between Mahleka and himself and set a number of bird-traps, telling Mahleka that he might examine them in the afternoon.

While Phiri was going on his long journey Mahleka began to ask his grandmother all about the rainbow he had seen in the morning.

"I want to know," said the Bull, "what the rainbow is made of."

"Some people," said his grandmother, "think that the rainbow is a snake, while other people

say it is a sheep rising out of a pool, or perhaps a spider's web ; but as for me, I think that it is one of the sticks of the hut belonging to the Queen of Heaven." As she said this she pointed to the curved sticks of her own hut, which were bent in the shape of a rainbow. So far from satisfying Mahleka, this only made him still more inquisitive.

" But I want to know, Grandmother, who is this Queen of Heaven, and are the heavens very far away, and can we climb up there along the spider's webs ? "

The grandmother answered that some people thought the heavens were quite close above the tops of the trees, and that people could climb the trees and so get into the sky ; other people thought that the sky was a great arch of rock, and that there were many people living in the heavens. " But I think," said she, " that the sky is caused by the smoke that rises from the fires."

" But how does the sun come up every day, Grandmother, and what happens to it when it sets ? "

" Some people tell us there is a new sun every day," said the old lady ; " but I think that when the sun sets it is boiled up in a pot of fat and sent up into the sky nice and hot next day."

"But, Grandmother," said Mosele, "why is it we can sometimes see the moon in the daytime?"

"The moon is in the sky," said the grandmother, "because it is its duty to be there."

For a wonder this explanation satisfied every one.

"But I want to know," said the Bull, "why the moon looks very bright after it has been raining."

Nokofa answered in a very superior tone, "Oh, of course it is because the moon has just washed its face in the rain."

"Yes, but, Grandmamma," said Mahleka, scornfully ignoring Nokofa, "I want to know why the moon is sometimes big and sometimes small."

"That is because the moon dies very slowly, or because small pieces are pulled off it every day. Some people say that there is a woman with a baby on her back in the moon, and that the moon cuts off small pieces of the woman every day."

At this Mosele pricked up her ears and said, "I hope they don't pull pieces off the baby by mistake—do they?"

"But I want to know," said Mahleka, not giving his grandmother time to answer Mosele's question, "what are the stars?"

"Oh, the stars are holes in the heavens, or they are

just like beads stuck on the bottom of the heavens :
at least, that is what my grandmother told me."

Then the old woman told the Bull, in answer to a series of questions, that clouds were big leather bags full of water which were sometimes emptied on the earth ; that earthquakes were caused by some chief who got very cross, or that they were caused by the dead chiefs beneath the ground ; as for the wind, it came "from across the great water," though no one quite knew where that was, and that it was kept in a hut, and was let out every now and then by the person who had charge of it. She told him that if he would only blow a horn or take a small vessel and hum a tune into it, the wind would at once begin to blow. She went on to say that lightning was a big bird that had golden-green feathers, and that when the bird was moulting it fell to earth, the noise it made being thunder, while the glittering of the feathers was lightning. These and a hundred other things the grandmother told Mahleka, who finally wanted to know whether thunder made more noise than a roaring lion. At this the old grandmother cried out, "Ah, my child, you mustn't talk about a lion in that disrespectful way, or you will make him very angry ; you must call him 'the man with the beard,' and then he

won't be cross with you ; it is very rude to call him a lion."

From talking about lions Mahleka began to ask questions about fabulous monsters. The old lady's voice got very hoarse and hollow as she said, "Oh, *Isikqukqumadevu* is a great big monster that lives in the river or on land ; she is a great big fellow, as big as a mountain, and has a great big beard. She eats people and oxen and huts all at a single gulp, and the people go on living inside her, for she is such a big creature. My mother used to call her 'The Mother of Beetles.' I can tell you *Isikqukqumadevu* is a terrible monster, and you had better not let her catch you when you are bathing or playing in the river."

"But, Grandmother, I want to know whether *Isikqukqumadevu* is the same as *Tickoloshe*."

"No, no ; *Tickoloshe* or *Ugilikakqwa* is a small dwarf who lives in the reeds and who only comes out at night to play spiteful tricks ; but if you are naughty *Tickoloshe* will come and pull you out of the hut at night and will carry you far away and leave you all alone in the bush. He is very strong though he is only a tiny fellow ; his legs are very thin, but his hands and feet are strong and powerful. If ever you see him be sure you don't tell him that

he is small, for that will make him very angry ; you must be very polite, and must flatter him by saying, 'You are so big, *Tickoloshe*, that I saw you when you were far, far away.' If you only do that, *Tickoloshe* will be so pleased that he won't hurt you at all."

Mahleka wanted to ask many more questions, but it was now time for the mid-day meal, and since there was some very delicious venison for dinner his chattering tongue found better occupation.

CHAPTER X

THE BULL OF THE KRAAL UP A TREE

"I WANT to know," said Mahleka, in a very loud whisper to Bombo, "whether there are any birds or Heavenly Maidens in the traps set by Phiri; I think there must be by now: will you come with me and see?" The whisper was so loud that everybody heard what was said, and at once all stopped in their play. The traps had been made by Phiri in the morning, but as he had been sent away on an errand he could not get back for an hour or two, and Mahleka was too impatient to wait any longer. As Bombo rose, all the others prepared to leave the hut, but Mahleka held out his hands in a pleading fashion and said, "No, don't come. It's a secret between me and Bombo; isn't it, Bombo?" "Rather so," said Bombo, who always loved to humour his little chief. "Nobody else must come, of course not."

At this the faces of the others fell, until

Tiye suggested that they should go and play at dolls.

As the boys left the hut the old Chief laughed and said, "I am sure the Bull deserves to catch some Heavenly Maidens, for he seems to think of nothing else." But the remark was lost on Mahleka, for he was out of hearing.

Mahleka and Bombo ran along the narrow path that led into the heart of the bush, Mahleka asking a number of questions and Bombo plaiting a piece of grass rope.

"If we find any Heavenly Maidens, Bombo, you must hold them tight with that rope you are plaiting, because you are strong, but I'll take off their wings, because I am much cleverer than you."

Bombo, who did not at all mind being told he was stupid, promised to hold the Heavenly Maidens ever so tightly and to tie them up securely. "But be sure you don't let them go, Bombo, till I tell you. How many do you think we shall catch? Won't it be fun to have them at my Evening Party? How many could you hold at once? You will let me marry them all, won't you? I want to know."

But Mahleka never waited to get any answers; indeed, he wanted to know so many things that

Bombo, whose brain worked very slowly, was about three questions behind when he answered. Thus they hurried along in single file, Mahleka walking backwards half the time and talking to his friend, while Bombo looked at the grass he was plaiting. After going about a couple of miles through the dense bush they came to a big circular clearing about a hundred yards across. Near the middle of this space there was an old thorn tree—a mimosa covered with a mass of yellow flowers. It had several broken branches at the bottom, which made it a favourite tree for the boys to play in, for these broken branches formed a number of steps for the climbers.

“I wonder if there are any Heavenly Maidens up in this tree,” said Mahleka, who added without waiting for an answer, “I don’t suppose there would be, for they would get their feathers torn in the thorns.”

They had passed the tree a few yards, their minds full of Heavenly Maidens, when they heard a loud purring noise which made their hearts jump into their mouths. About forty or fifty yards away in front of them at the edge of the bush, a lioness was playing with her two cubs. She was lying on her back in the middle of the path; one of

the cubs was worrying her tail and was pulling it about just as a mischievous puppy worries the tail of its mother; the other cub was standing straddle-legged across her neck, and was pretending to bite her face.

Mahleka was the first to notice the lions. He screamed at the top of his voice and seized hold of Bombo. In a moment the lioness jumped on to her feet in front of her cubs and faced the two boys. Her tail went up with a great swish and stood erect over her head; her eyes seemed to burn like coals of fire; every hair in her body bristled up as she snarled at the intruders. For a moment she stood facing the boys, but before she had time to advance, Bombo, taking Mahleka by the hand, simply flew into the tree. It is said—and we may well believe it—to have been the one time in Bombo's life in which he was in a hurry. Neither he nor Mahleka could ever explain how it was that they found themselves in one of the branches with their legs and arms all scratched and bleeding owing to the sharp thorns of the tree.

Had Bombo been a Heavenly Maiden he could not have flown up into the tree more quickly. As it was, the lioness nearly caught them. She made a great spring, but fortunately hit a branch which

stopped her. Even so, her claws just grazed Bombo's heel ; but she fell down head over heels on to the ground in a rage. In a moment Bombo and Mahleka climbed like monkeys to a higher branch, both of them terrified out of their lives. "Do you think, Bombo," said Mahleka, when safely out of reach of the lioness, "that if we were to climb up to the top of the tree we could get into the heavens, and so escape ? You know Grandmother said the sky was just above the tops of the trees." Bombo, however, thought it would be impossible.

The lioness saw it was no good trying to spring again, so she lifted her cubs in her mouth and carried them into the bush ; having hidden them, she returned and prowled round and round the tree, boiling with rage. She flicked her tail about like an angry cat, every now and then looking up at the boys. When she was tired of walking round and round, she paced backwards and forwards, always keeping close to the tree, though every now and then she would walk up to the trunk as if she intended to climb the tree. When she did this the boys clutched one another and screamed ; but the lioness simply scratched the bark with her claws and began to growl. Every story Mahleka had ever heard about lions came into his head. Bombo

said to him, "I expect the lion is very angry because of the disrespectful way you spoke about lions this morning." So Mahleka looked at the lioness and said very politely, "Will the Man with the Beard please go away and leave Mahleka and Bombo alone?"

But all in vain. The lioness snarled and growled worse than ever.

"But she is a woman," said Bombo, "and she will be very angry if you call her a man with the beard."

The grandmother had not told him how to address a lioness, and so Mahleka did not know what to say.

For two long hours the boys were in the tree, while the lioness kept sentinel. Every now and then she would pause in her walk and look up at the captives; then she would snarl and show her teeth and swish her tail. Every time she did this Mahleka clutched hold of Bombo, hiding his face in Bombo's breast, for he could not face those fierce and flaming eyes; while the low purring growl sent a shudder down his spine worse than that which would have been caused by a good roar. Well does the Kafir proverb say, The lion that kills is not the one that roars.

When they noticed that the sun was getting low the thought of spending the night in the tree made them cry out for help ; but no answer came back. Once their hearts leapt with joy when they thought they saw the sign of some one coming through the bush ; but it proved to be only the bending of a tree caused by the wind. The disappointed hope made them feel quite sick, for they saw that it was useless to expect any one to come to their rescue. And there we must leave them in the tree while we return to the kraal.

When Phiri returned from his errand late in the afternoon, without saying a word to any one he marched off alone to see whether there were any birds in his traps. Nothing escaped his keen, quick eyesight, and he told by the foot-marks in the dust of the pathway that Bombo and Mahleka had recently gone that way. When he was a few paces from the clearing in the bush he caught sight of the lioness, who was too much occupied in watching the boys in the tree to hear Phiri's footsteps. In a moment he fell on the ground, so as not to be seen, and, peeping through the bush, saw Mahleka and Bombo in the tree. Phiri always had his wits about him ; so like a cat he crawled away stealthily on his hands and knees, and when

he was out of hearing got up and ran like the wind. Arriving at the kraal, he spread the news at once. The Chief was sitting with six men—all still talking about the precious calf; but on hearing the news he at once told all these men to fetch their shields, assegais, and knob-kerries and to follow him. These shields were made of thick, stiff ox-hide, and were shaped like the backs of tortoises, being so big that they protected the whole body. Phiri was the only boy allowed to follow; he took a big shield—big enough to cover two boys of his size—and picked up a large knife with a blade about a foot long, which had been given to the Chief as a present. Phiri was known to be so cunning that in an emergency like this he was allowed to do what he pleased.

The Chief, followed by his six men, raced along the path, being led by Phiri, who knew the way. As soon as they came in sight of the tree they heard screams of delight from the two boys in the branches. The lioness looked up into the tree to see what was the cause of the noise, as the Chief, followed by his six men, burst out of the bush into the clearing. Not a word was spoken, for every man, without being told, knew what he had to do.

The rescuers formed themselves into a large

crescent, and advanced towards the tree ; the Chief, raising his shield above his head, and poising his assegai in his right hand, walked up alone in front of the others towards the lioness. The moment she saw the Chief advancing towards her she shook her tail from side to side like a bad-tempered cat, challenging him with two short, angry snarls. Looking round from side to side to make sure that none of the other men were attacking her, she trotted up towards the Chief till she was about five yards off, and then stopped so as to get ready to spring. The Chief kept perfectly quiet as the lioness ran at him, knowing she would pause before she sprang. The moment she stopped there was a tremendous whirr as the Chief's assegai flew through the air, and then there was a dull thud as the blade of the spear grated on the shoulder-bone of the animal.

The assegai stuck firm in her flesh, and the lioness roared with rage and fury. Unable to spring on account of the weapon sticking in her shoulder, she ran at the Chief, who, however, fell on to the ground like magic and covered himself with his enormous shield. Up to this moment none of the other men had moved : they simply held their assegais poised and ready for action and awaited

events. They had scarcely noticed the fact that Phiri had followed the Chief, and that he had fallen down under his own shield but a couple of yards off; he was going to take his luck, and was determined his Chief should not be killed if any cunning of his could prevent it.

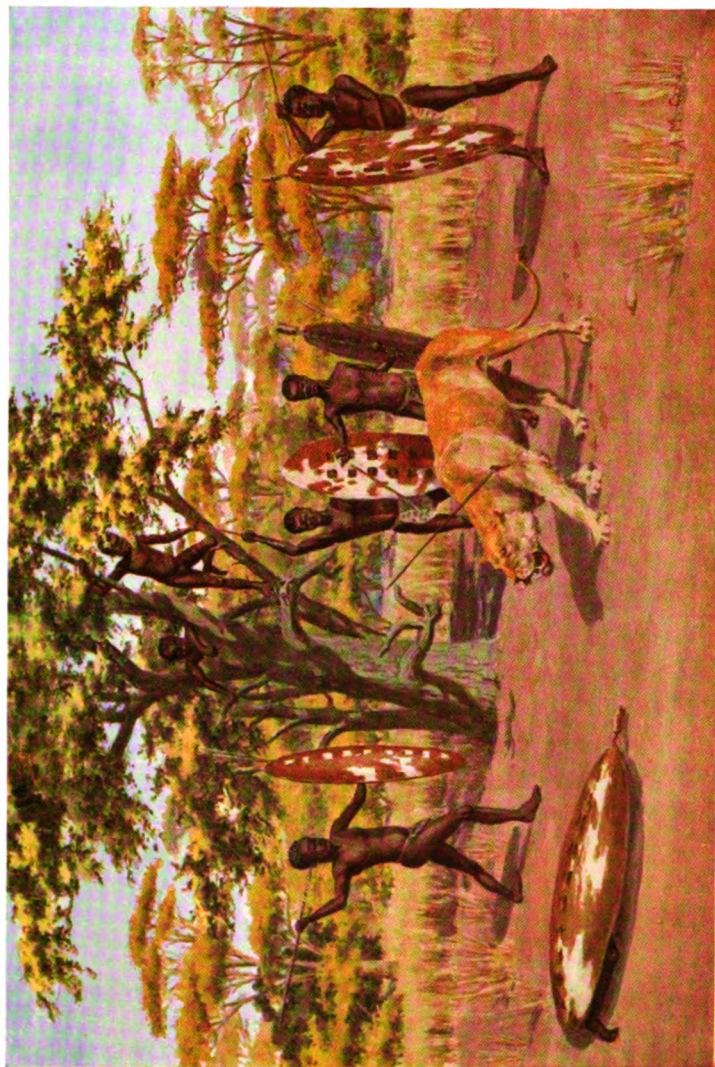
When the man vanished under his shield, the lioness was very puzzled, and walked up to him in a cautious and timid fashion, picking her steps carefully as if fearing some snare. She sniffed the ground close to the Chief, and then gave the shield a pat with her huge paw. Suddenly six assegais whistled through the air at her from all points of the crescent. One of them hit the Chief's shield, glancing off and cutting his foot, which was not quite covered; two assegais missed altogether, while three hit home and stuck in the body of the lioness.

She sprang up in a white heat of anger. With the assegais sticking out of her like the quills of a porcupine, she turned her head from side to side, snarling and glaring at her foes. She left the Chief and ran towards the men, who like lightning fell on the ground and covered themselves with their shields. The view from the tree was as comical as it is possible to imagine, and Mahleka and Bombo

screamed with delight; it looked to them as if there were eight huge tortoises on the ground, each cautiously putting out his head beneath his armour, and ducking immediately the lioness showed signs of advancing. At last the man farthest away from the tree arose, walked deliberately towards the lioness, and threw his assegai, which stuck in the animal's hindquarters. Before she could get at him he was on the ground hidden under his shield. Baffled once more, the lioness roared and determined to take her revenge. She pounced on the shield, half squeezing the breath out of the man's body; but no sooner had she begun to worry the shield as a dog worries a mat than all the six men rose to their feet and hurled assegais at her. Then all, except the one who was near the tree, sank on to the ground and covered themselves with their shields.

In a perfect fury, and blind in her rage, the lioness flew at the man close to the thorn tree. He was so taken by surprise that he had no time to throw an assegai, but simply fell on the soft, sandy ground and pulled his shield over his body.

The lioness pounced on him with such force that she bent his shield flat with the weight of her charge, half exposing the man at the same time. She had



THE LION HUNT.

just grabbed his arm in her mouth when the six tortoises vanished; in their place stood six men, who hurled another volley of assegais at her. The lioness, apparently thinking that they were alive, turned round to snap at some of the many spears that were now sticking in her. She crunched up one of these in her mouth, yelping in pain all the time, and thus gave the man on the ground time to cover himself with his shield.

By this time the Chief had shifted his ground and was standing under the thorn tree, Phiri having again taken up his position by his side. The lioness, seeing that she was once again defrauded of her prey, turned and ran to attack the Chief. To everybody's surprise tremendous yells were heard issuing from the tree; for the Bull of the Kraal, who in his excitement had lost his balance, came crashing through the branches. He fell roaring like half a dozen bulls, and tumbled on to the ground close to the Chief, and but a few yards from the enraged animal. At first the lioness could not make out what had happened. As she turned round towards Mahleka to see what the noise was all about, one of the spears sticking in her side evidently caused her acute pain, for she gave a yelp and worried the assegai, munching it up into splinters

with her terrible jaws. The Chief had no assegais left, so he drew his knob-kerrie, a heavy ironwood stick three feet long, with a big knob about the size of a small cocoanut at the end. He placed himself between Mahleka and the lioness, holding the kerrie in the air so as to be ready to strike a blow at a moment's notice. Phiri, who was kneeling a little to one side of the Chief, peeped round the edge of his shield and saw the danger. His long knife flashed in the sunshine as he threw away his shield. The lioness had to pass close to him to attack the Chief, and Phiri was about to plunge his weapon into the body of the animal when he suddenly changed his mind: he let his knife fall to the ground, and like lightning seized a handful of the loose, sandy earth. Then as the lioness passed him he grasped her tail with his left hand and gave it a furious tug. He drew back his right arm just as the maddened animal turned round to punish this new insult. But before she could clearly see who it was that was tugging at her tail, Phiri, as quick as thought, threw the handful of sand right into her eyes, blinding her completely. There was a furious roar as the lioness instinctively put down her head between her front paws to rub the sand from her eyes; in a moment the Chief rained down upon her

head three or four tremendous blows with his heavy ironwood kerrie. The thuds could be heard far in the distance, for they were delivered with such energy and force that they simply pounded the head of the lioness into a jelly.

The conclusion of the fight was so instantaneous that no one seemed quite to know how it all happened, but by the time the other six men came up to the rescue, the Bull, the Chief, Phiri, and the lioness were all mixed up in a heap, just as if they had been having a scrimmage. The Bull was picked up and found to be unhurt, save for twenty or thirty scratches and a big bruise on the spot on which he had fallen. The Chief had one of his ankles strained, in addition to the assegai wound in his foot, and the man whose arm had been worried by the lioness was in considerable pain; but otherwise there was no damage done.

By this time a number of people had arrived, and amongst them a witch-doctor, who carefully cut off certain portions of the body of the lioness, choosing the claws, the teeth, the whiskers, and the heart, so as to make medicine. When he had taken what he wanted, the body of the animal was skinned; and then the whole party moved home, arriving at the kraal about dusk. Mahleka's mother was over-

joyed to see her Bull. She looked at his body and cried out in astonishment at all his scratches; she then said to him, "Now who was it that was complaining only this morning about being buried in the sand? If we had not doctored you this morning so as to give you good luck, the lioness might have eaten you. So never say again that it's a nuisance to do what you are told."

Before long the diviner brought some powder to be mixed with Mahleka's drinking water. He had taken some of the hair, claws, and teeth of the lioness and had ground them into powder; he had charred to cinders portions of the heart, and then had mixed all these things up with the powdered roots of some shrubs and herbs. He told the Bull of the Kraal that if only he would put a little of this mixture in all his food his heart would grow as fearless and his body as strong as though he were a lion.

As the men stretched out the skin of the lioness on the ground with a number of little wooden pegs they told the whole exciting adventure to scores of people who had come up to hear the news. Several spoke at once, praising the Chief's boldness and the cunning of Phiri; half a dozen mimicked the noise that the Chief's assegai had made when it first hit

the lioness, and imitated with gusto the sound of the heavy thuds caused by the Chief's knob-kerrie as it had smashed the skull of the brute.

The skin of the animal was to be kept when dry as a kaross (or fur rug) for Mahleka ; and as the Chief gave orders about it, Bombo, who had already made himself notorious for the speed with which he flew into the tree, rose in everybody's estimation by making the only sage remark he was ever known to utter in his life. After much thought he said, " You know, little Bull, it's much better to be lying on the outside of the skin of a dead lion than to be lying inside the skin of a live one."

By this time it was quite dark, and Hobohobo, always glad to tease people, crawled up on his hands and knees behind the Bull, roaring like a lion. Mahleka's nerves were naturally unstrung after his adventures of the day, and so he screamed out in terror. But this time Hobohobo overdid it. The Chief looked round, glaring at the bully, and said to Hobohobo's father, " Give that boy a thrashing." The father rose silently, took the boy outside, and obeyed his chief with the best will in the world. The thrashing was such a sound one that the children in the hut shivered as they heard the blows raining down on the bully's back. But

everybody was glad that he was at last being paid out. That night, and on many nights following, it was noticed that Hobohobo slept lying on his face, and Phiri smartly nicknamed him Skin-sore, a name that clung to him for many years.

Day after day people called at the Great Place to hear about the lion hunt. When the Chief had finished telling the story, he would call up Phiri and pat him on the shoulder, telling the people that he was a brave, cunning boy. One day when the Chief told the tale to a great diviner, he said to Phiri, "Come here, my clever little Wolf: would you like to become a diviner? For here is the greatest doctor in the country, who will take you as his assistant if you like." Very few boys had ever been patted on the shoulder by the Chief, fewer had been told by him that they were brave, and none had ever been told that they were clever; and since the dream of Phiri's life was to become a doctor, it can be imagined that when he was thus introduced to the great diviner he felt as glad and important as a boy who has made a century at a school cricket-match.

CHAPTER XI

THE GIRL WHO WOULD NOT SPEAK : THE FAIRY-TALE FOR THE THIRD NIGHT

It was natural that the adventure with the lion should occupy the thoughts of the Bull of the Kraal. When the people were talking round the fire that night, Mahleka, who was being petted by Nokofa, kept asking questions which had nothing to do with the subject under discussion. Thus when his father was talking about the oxen, the Bull broke into the middle of the conversation by saying, "Baba, I want to know if it's really true that the little birds of the forest shiver in their nests when they hear the lions roar." Instead of replying to this question the father thought it wiser to change the subject, and so he said, "You go along to your grandmother and ask her to tell you another story about Heavenly Maidens." This plan was successful, for the children found the grandmother sitting all alone in her hut. She began to examine

Mahleka's body, and called out, "Wow! Just look at your bruises and scratches! You see what comes from talking disrespectfully about the Man with the Beard. What? Tell you a story to-night when you have brought me no birds to eat?" The latter remark was addressed to Nokofa, who had asked for a fairy-tale. "But, Grandmother," said Nokofa, "Mahleka and Bombo were on their way to the bird-traps when the lioness met them, so they couldn't get you any birds, could they?"

The old woman admitted the truth of this excuse, and said she would tell them a story provided they promised to hunt for some birds in the morning. After thinking for a few minutes she said, "I will tell you the story of Skin-sore and the girl who would not speak."

SKIN-SORE AND THE GIRL WHO WOULD NOT SPEAK

Once upon a time a man married a wife and had a daughter. Said he, "My child's name is Madzinga," for she was born in possession of a staff. One day the child went to the river to bathe, but unfortunately she dropped her staff into the pool.

Thereupon Madzinga returned home saying,

"Mother, my staff has been carried away into the pool."

"Well," said her mother, "do you mean to go after it into a pool in which there are hippopotamuses and snakes and pythons and other monsters?"

"Yes," she answered, "I mean to go in it."

"But are you not afraid of being eaten?" said the mother.

"If I am eaten, I am eaten," replied the girl. So she went her way, and on reaching the pool began her magic song:

Round and round : Nhandi Madzinga ;
Round and round : Madzinga an old woman ;
Round and round : Pool, please go ;
Round and round : Nzuzu, please go ;
Round and round : Snake, please go ;
Round and round : Hippopotamus, please go ;
Round and round : Python, please go ;
Round and round : Otter, please go."

So off went all the beasts, and the pool also disappeared. Then Madzinga went in to fetch her staff, and brought it out safely, leaving the water to return again and fill the pool. The girl meanwhile went home, and, coming to her mother, said, "I have got my staff."

"Many thanks," said the mother.

The father said, "Let us give you a husband."

"No," said the girl, "I do not want to be given a husband ; I mean to look for one myself."

"Very well," said the parents ; "look out for one yourself."

"As for me," said the girl, "the man who makes me speak, he it is that marries me."

Thereupon the father told the people, "He who makes my child speak, he shall marry her."

So the people went to see her ; and though they talked on all manner of interesting and jesting subjects, yet she kept quiet. They all, without exception, failed to make her speak.

Then Skin-sore came forth. Said the people, "Do you want to go too?"

"I *do* want to go," he replied, "and try just for fun."

Reaching his destination he found the girl in the fields engaged in picking Kafir corn and planting it. So he started picking it too, but planted it with the roots upward in the air and the leaves downward in the soil. He kept on doing this, placing the Kafir corn upside down, till he had finished planting the whole field in this idiotic fashion. At last the girl said, "No, no ; why

are you planting that Kafir corn in that absurd way?"

"You have spoken," answered the boy, "so you are my wife."

Thereupon the girl started crying. So the boy shouted out to the people, "The girl has spoken."

The older people assembled and danced around them in his honour, but the young men said, "No, no; shall the girl be taken by one who has skin-sores?"

"I will not refuse the boy," said Madzinga, "for I have spoken with him; but had I not spoken to him——"

So off went Skin-sore to his kraal, taking his wife with him. When he had reached his home he went into a pool, and came out free from all skin-sores, thus becoming a proper man.

"That's the end of the story," said the grandmother.

"Oh, it's such a short one; do tell us another story about Heavenly Maidens," said Mahleka. "I do so want to hear more about them, Grandmother."

"But I don't know any more stories about the Heavenly Maidens. However, I know one about Skin-sore and a White Bird."

"Oh, yes; tell us that, grandmother," said all the children.

"Very well," said the old woman; "but you must all go to bed the moment that's done."

SKIN-SORE AND THE WHITE BIRD

Once upon a time there was a certain chief who had two children; later on he had ten more. After many years the chief died, and his children said, "Now who is heir to the chieftainship?"

"It is I," said Zimwambanje, the youngest child, "for it was I who was born first."

"Do you think," said the other children, "that you, who are so small a child, shall be chief?"

"And why should I not be the chief?" replied the child.

Upon that the brothers drove Zimwambanje away with the words, "Get out of here, you who wish to rob us of our father's kingdom."

So the child built himself a hut on the other side of the river, saying, "Seeing that you have driven me away—me, Zimwambanje—what do you want with me? Do you want to fight?"

"Yes," said they; "come here and let us fight."

Yes, indeed we do want to fight. If you get the better of us you shall be chief."

"Good," replied the child; "come and let us fight then."

Zimwambanje utterly defeated all his brothers, who even summoned other chiefs to help them. All alone the child defeated his brothers. Then he took all their wives, and built himself a large kraal.

One day, many years after, Zimwambanje fell sick while his eldest son was away on a journey. When the son returned the father said to all his children, "Whoever shall catch me a white bird shall be chief after me."

All the children hunted in the bush for a white bird. When Zimwambanje noticed Skin-sore, his smallest child, remaining behind he said, "Go thou too, my child, and hunt for a white bird."

All the elder children hunted in vain for a white bird, but Skin-sore soon caught one, and returned to his father.

"Ah!" said Zimwambanje, "thou shalt be chief after my death; thou shalt inherit my kingdom."

Upon his father's death Skin-sore said to his

elder brothers, "I am chief, for I was the one who caught the white bird for my father."

"Wait a bit," said his brothers; "did any one ever see a kingdom ruled over by a Skin-sore?"

"What!" replied the child, "shall I forbear to take the kingdom when it was I who caught the white bird for my father?"

"You shall never have the kingdom," said the elder brothers; "we will kill you before we give you the kingdom."

So they drove Skin-sore away, and the kingdom remained in the hands of the eldest brother. The little child Skin-sore went off all alone into the bush, and met a white bird.'

At this point the Bull could contain himself no longer. He had not been listening to the story, but had been thinking about the lioness he had seen in the afternoon. So he called out to his grandmother, "But, Grandmother, I want to know whether Skin-sore ever went hunting lions?" This was too much for Bombo, who had been listening eagerly. He called out, "Grandmother, I do wish you wouldn't let Mahleka interrupt. I want to follow the story, but Mahleka keeps on interrupting; do tell him not to do it. How can

we have two stories told to us to-night if he keeps on asking questions ?”

“Oh,” said the grandmother, “you must remember that Mahleka is the Bull of the Kraal, so he is not like other boys. He may ask questions if he likes, of course.”

But Nokofa took Mahleka into her arms, and told him that if he would stop asking questions she would give him something very nice to eat in the morning. This proved quite enough to keep him quiet.

Then the grandmother said, “Dear me, where was I ? I have quite forgotten what happened last.”

“They drove Skin-sore away,” said Phiri, always on the alert, “and the kingdom remained in the hands of the eldest brother.”

The old grandmother remembered at once where she was, and continued the story thus :

The little child Skin-sore went off all alone into the bush, and met a white bird.

“What are you crying for ?” asked the white bird.

“I am crying for my kingdom that has been taken away from me,” replied the child.

“Is that what you are crying for ?” asked the bird.

"Yes, indeed," replied the child.

"Let us, then, go to your brothers," said the bird.
 "But if I get you your kingdom what will you give me?"

"I will give you whatever you like, if only I may be chief."

Off Skin-sore ran with the white bird. When they arrived at the kraal the bird said to the brothers, "Seeing that you have taken away the kingdom from Skin-sore, was it to you that it was given by your father?"

"No," replied they; "'tis he that was given it. But shall a kraal be ruled over by a Skin-sore?"

"Yes," said the bird; "he shall have the kingdom."

"We will kill him before we submit to being ruled over by a Skin-sore," said the brothers.

"Well, then," said the bird, "I will kill you."

"But can you, being a bird, kill us who are men?"

The bird straightway plucked out one of its feathers and tied up all the brothers with it, saying, "Do you want to be killed?"

"Ee!" said the brothers, "we do not want to be killed; 'tis he who is chief, even Skin-Sore."

"Well," said the bird, "then clap him at once

and show that you own him as your chief"; for the bird understood the customs of the people, and knew that a man is always clapped by the people when he is made chief.

"But how can we clap him," said the brothers, "seeing that you have bound us all with your feather?"

"If I untie you," said the white bird, "will you promise to give Skin-sore all he asks for?"

"We promise," said the brothers.

Then the white bird untied the brothers, and flew away into the bush.

"And now," said the grandmother, "just all run off to bed; for you have had quite enough excitement for one day. If you will only be good and go to sleep at once I'll tell you two fairy-tales to-morrow night."

They all thanked her, and at once ran off to their different huts, though Mahleka, as a special treat, was allowed to sleep with his grandmother.

THE FOURTH DAY

CHAPTER XII

FUN WITH THE HERD-BOYS

IN the morning, when Tiye and Mosele had put away the sleeping mats, they left the Bull with his grandmother and ran off to visit the doll's house, with which they had been playing on the previous afternoon while Mahleka and Bombo were kept up the tree by the lion. The Chief sat on the ground watching Mahleka being washed, and listened to his prattle, which never seemed to cease.

The Bull had evidently been suffering from nightmare, and was telling his grandmother a long rigmarole of a story, all in one or two sentences. Said he, "I was walking in the bush, and two great big cannibals who had heads like lions ran after me, and I climbed up a tree and got up into the sky and saw lots of Heavenly Maidens with lovely

wings. When the cannibals came to the bottom of the tree they smelt the ground just like dogs and climbed up the tree and ran after me, but they only touched the tip of my heel, for a Heavenly Maiden flew along on each side of me and held my hands, and I flew through the air." Here Mahleka had to pause for breath, but he continued, "I saw an ant-bear's hole, and I crept into it, and the cannibals tried to pull me out, and pressed against my chest; they pressed harder and harder and harder, and hurt me ever so much; and then the bottom of the sky fell out, and I tumbled with a tremendous bump on to the earth. I am so sorry I left hold of the Heavenly Maidens, for I do so want them for my Evening Party."

The Chief listened to the end of the story, and then said, "Oh, you Baboon, you were just dreaming while you were asleep. What was it he ate last night?" Mahleka did not wait for his grandmother to answer, but declared that what he had been telling had really and truly happened, and that he had been wide awake all the time, or how could he remember it all so clearly? The grandmother tried to explain that what had seemed a real experience was but a dream, and that it was only his shadow, or his ghost, that had

left his body sleeping and that had gone hunting in the world above the tops of the trees. She assured him that his fat body had been under her blanket all night. Mahleka, however, insisted that he had seen the Heavenly Maidens, and again expressed his regret that he had not pulled them down to earth. So vivid had the experience been that he persisted in maintaining the thing was not a dream. No wonder the boy was puzzled because his father added that when the body sleeps the spirit often goes away to visit its friends.

While this explanation was being given, Mahleka turned round and saw his favourite knob-kerrie in the hands of one of his brothers, who was about thirteen years old. The Bull grew furious, and, stamping his foot, shouted out, "Didn't I tell you never to touch my kerrie? Leave it alone at once: do you hear what I say?" This he said with infinite scorn in his voice as he glared at his disobedient elder brother. He accentuated his words by pointing his thumb at the offender; for, being the future Chief, his thumb was daily washed with powerful medicines, so that no one might be able to resist its authority.

When he had scolded his brother he saw two hens struggling together over a piece of food that

lay on the floor close to his feet : evidently he had not got rid of all his angry feelings, and so he kicked out his foot at the birds, which instantly flew about the hut in great alarm, creating a terrible din. Having relieved his feelings, he turned round smiling towards his grandmother, and received her caresses as though he were conferring a great favour upon her. The Chief looked on and laughed, saying, "E ! but that's a fine little Bull of mine ; just see how he orders his big brothers about with that thumb of his."

As soon as Mahleka had been anointed with grease, he ran outside the hut, for he heard a number of his friends talking in an excited manner. He found that one of the boys had just lost his first tooth, which he held in his hand, while he poked one finger into his mouth to point out the hole left in the jaw. Half a dozen boys were all shouting out at once, "You must throw the tooth over the roof of the hut and ask Hloele* to give you a new tooth ; for if you don't do that you will never get a new one." When the boy had thoroughly examined his tooth he threw it over the hut, saying, "Hloele, here's my old tooth ; please give me a new one." Having done that, he felt

* Pronounced Hlōēlē. It is a small yellow bird.

distinctly better, for he had been much alarmed when he found his tooth loose.

Breakfast was now ready, and so the family gathered round the cooking-pot. The big boys who herded the cattle had often promised the Bull of the Kraal that they would take him out for the day and let him ride on the calves, toboggan down the banks of the river into the water, and do all sorts of jolly, mischievous, forbidden things. Great was Mahleka's delight when, during breakfast, the herd-boys whispered to him that he was to spend the day with them; for they were going to have special fun, as they had challenged the herd-boys of a rival kraal to wrestling, fighting and racing matches.

Kafir children have a regular system of fagging, and the head-boy for the day has a glorious time, for he lies down in the shade and makes the other boys work for him in the sun while he orders them to fetch him food or drink. If there should not be sufficient food, the big boy makes a fag go and steal some; if the boy gets found out, he is expected to take his thrashing without "sneaking" about his fag-master; if he is successful, he gets but little of the stolen food, for the big boy takes the lion's share. 'This does not seem at all fair; but then the

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small boy knows that the day will soon come when he will be old enough to fag others. There is another advantage, too; when the fag gets into a scrape with the boys of a rival kraal, his master always takes his part and fights his battle for him: he is, therefore, said to "live under the shadow" or protection of the big one: this is a great advantage and makes up for much of the trouble of fagging.

The herd-boys made three small children do special fag-duty for the day, and sent them off directly after breakfast, telling them to take some old worn-out blankets, a couple of dried ox-skins, as well as some food, and to hide them in the bush at a spot agreed upon.

Any one who knew the habits of the boys could have told that a fight was brewing, for they paid peculiar attention to their sticks, which they selected with great care. The Bull of the Kraal was so excited that he could scarcely be persuaded to eat his breakfast, a thing that was extremely rare. He was restless with impatience, and thought the men would never let the oxen out of the cattle-kraal, for they waited, as usual, until the dew was off the grass. When at last the men withdrew the two poles which closed the cattle-kraal opening, the oxen slowly trailed out in single file and wended

their way to the pasturage. A couple of boys walked in front so as to show the cattle the grazing-ground for the day, while two or three other lads walked behind so as to prevent the hindmost cattle from straying. As soon as the herd-boys had gone a little distance from the kraal, they threw off their blankets and carried them on the two sticks which they held over their shoulders.

The head-boy for the day was Makiwane ; he had been called " Figs " because the people in the kraal had been ill from eating too many wild figs on the day on which he was born. He was a big, genial, commonplace sort of lad about sixteen years of age, and though rather rough was always kind to the small boys and took their part against the bullies ; and being fond of the Bull of the Kraal he used to pet him a good deal.

As soon as the cattle had reached the grazing ground, Makiwane told the fags to bring out the food they had hidden and to place it in the branches of the large wild fig-tree that formed the headquarters for the day. As soon as they had reached this tree all the boys began to eat the fruit, and to prevent unpleasant consequences they threw figs at one another, saying, " Fig do not upset me, upset this one." When every boy had had a fig thrown

at him, Makiwane picked up a fig and threw it at the tree, saying, "Fig do not upset me, upset the fig-tree." Having performed this charm, they all felt quite sure that they would not be ill.

Before long the party was joined by a dozen herd-boys from a neighbouring kraal, who left their cattle grazing in the care of two small fags. Makiwane decided that the fun should begin with a toboggan race down the banks of the river, and had already sent off a number of girls under the leadership of his sweetheart Nontando, to prepare the run. The girl was very wrongly called "With Love," for she was a big, ugly, cross creature, with a very vindictive nature. No one cared to quarrel with her because she was as agile as she was pugnacious.

The whole party of boys gathered up the old blankets and ox-hides and ran off to a bend of the river which was but a little way off. When they reached the top of the rise that overlooked the water, they saw about a dozen girls making the toboggan run. The maidens, each carrying a large earthenware pot on her head, walked down to the river, and having filled their pots with water hoisted them on to their heads; then, led by Nontando, the dozen girls marched up the river bank, which was a

steep incline about fifty yards long ; having reached the top of the bank they started singing a chant ; at a certain pause in the rhythm all the girls emptied their pots with a great splash over the course, and laughed with delight as they watched the water running down the hill. This process was repeated again and again until the bank was one mass of slippery mud. The boys carefully examined the run, and made the girls fetch more water which was poured over those portions of earth which were not sufficiently soured ; they placed the old blankets on the ground, and lying down wrapped themselves up in them, and then began to roll down the wet bank like a number of logs of wood. They soon became entangled with one another and held a regular scrimmage, shouting and pulling the blankets from one another, and rolling their rivals in the mud, till they were covered with dirt from head to foot. All this went on with great good humour until the game had played itself out.

The boys then produced their stiff ox-hides which were nearly as rigid as tea-trays. Two or three boys sat on one of these stiff skins and tobogganed down the slippery "run," and amidst shouts and yells from the onlookers plunged over a steep bank into a deep pool in the river with a

tremendous splash. When it was found that everything was in order, the great toboggan match started. Mahelka was placed between Makiwane and Bombo, and though he could not swim, he trusted them to rescue him from the water, which was well out of his depth. He got so excited that even when he was dragged out of the river spluttering and gasping for breath like a half-drowned rat, he shouted "Again," and ran up the bank for the next turn. The boys who looked on began to bet on these toboggan races, one boy betting his new knobkerrie, another a goat, or a hen, or some such article. The interest grew intense when each side had won three matches. The seventh and deciding one found Mahleka simply wild with glee, as sitting between Makiwane and Bombo he screamed with delight when his toboggan shot over the steep bank into the water a good three yards ahead of the rivals, thus winning the victory for his kraal.

A little lower down the river, there was a place where a number of black rocks appeared above the surface of the water, and so the whole crowd raced off to play at Stepping Stones. They jumped from stone to stone, any one touching the water with his feet being disqualified. The game went on until there was but one boy left. The Bull was

disqualified early in the game and was standing in the water intently watching the others, when Hobohobo came floating quietly down stream behind him. When he was a yard or two away from Mahleka, he imitated the strange sort of barking noise a crocodile makes when it is angry. He shouted out the word "crocodile" and made a furious bite at Mahleka's hip. The Bull ran out of the river screaming, for he thought he had been caught by a crocodile. Makiwane happened to see this and so he caught Hobohobo and ducked him under the water. As Hobohobo came to the surface gasping for breath, Makiwane said, "I'll teach you to bully your chief, you young scoundrel; you are a crocodile, are you? Then go and live under the water." Again and again did Makiwane duck the bully, until Hobohobo, who protested he never meant to hurt Mahleka, promised faithfully he would never bully him again. As Hobohobo was being paid out, the other boys kept calling out with delight, "That's right, good old Figs, duck the Finch well. Do it again, don't let him off too easily." When this punishment was completed, the boys collected all the dirty old blankets and ox-hides, and sent them back to the kraal, bidding one of the girls conceal them till no one was looking.

The rest of the party returned to the cattle to start their calf-races.

Half a dozen fine, skittish young calves were chosen, and boys were selected to ride as jockeys. The small urchins jumped on to the bare backs of the calves, which they had to guide by voice and gesture, no reins being used. At first the calves began to frisk and buck, and to throw up their heels, and not a few jockeys got thrown, only to jump again on to the calves. It was some time before the animals could be brought to draw up in line, but at length this was managed. Then when the word to start was given, the calves careered all over the place, kicking the dirt up with their heels and plunging in all sorts of fantastic ways. But the boys guided their animals along the course, and amidst great cheering the Bull of the Kraal won the first race and promptly received the prize which consisted of some honey that the herd-boys had discovered the day before. The Bull swaggered about the place—"ate himself up" as Makiwane said—as proud as a peacock and shared his prize with all the other boys, who probably stuck to their calves the better after they were smeared all over with the honey.

The calves were once more being ridden up to the starting-place by a new set of lads, when a small

boy, who had been posted to keep "cave," gave the alarm and said that some men were coming. Like lightning all the riders slipped off their calves and lay about on the ground, trying to look as innocent as they could, for they knew they would get a thrashing if discovered by the men. The astonished calves looked at their recently vigorous persecutors and wondered what had happened; they sniffed at the prostrate riders and then scampered off in all directions, glad to break loose from their tormentors. The boys lay still until they were told that it was a false alarm, and that the men had gone off in a different direction. No sooner was this known than the boys suddenly got up and chased the young calves, so as to continue their fun. A great rival race between the two kraals was decided on, and it was agreed that the two head-boys of the respective kraals should choose their own calves and ride for the honour of their kraals.

Mahleka offered any amount of patronising advice to Makiwane, imagining that his recent victory, as well as the fact he was one day to be the chief, entitled him to swagger to his heart's content. Makiwane was twice his age and size, but he received the advice in all good humour, and flattered his future chief. The calves proved very restive, for

the previous race had excited them, and the two champions received a good many falls before they could persuade their calves to stand at the starting-point. When the word for starting was given, all the onlookers raised such a shout that the terrified beasts thought their last hour had come, and in their fright promptly threw both riders on to the ground and gave them a good kicking. It was, of course, a point of honour not to cry out or complain when hurt, and so the lads arose much bruised and ran after their calves. The race was finally run amidst great enthusiasm, and when the riders had rounded the bush which marked the middle of the course, and began to race home again, all the onlookers grew hoarse with shouting. The two calves seemed to enter into the spirit of the race and tore like the wind, keeping neck by neck until within half a dozen yards of the goal, when the calf ridden by the champion of the rival kraal stopped dead and threw its rider over its head. The boy was sent tumbling head over heels through the air and came down with a tremendous thump on his head, but his skull was so thick and his brains so scanty that he did not seem in the least hurt. Thus did Makiwane win the race and become a hero in the eyes of all his friends.

And now began some foot races. The boys are excellent runners, and can travel many miles at a rapid pace. When they have to go long distances they start by running very slowly, holding their breath as much as ever they can ; they refrain from breathing except through the nose, for they think that this saves any needless expenditure of breath and makes the body light. They then run faster and breathe a little more fully, and at length increase their pace to the utmost and breathe as fully as they can. In some tribes the boys never swing their left hands as they run, but hold them up bent against their body ; yet they move the right arm as if it were a windmill. If they were to swing the left arm they would be laughed at and told they were girls.

When a number of boys are running in single file, they adopt a curious method of getting a "second wind": the boy in front sings out, "Where was Saoole going with his big knobkerrie?" while the rest join the refrain, "With his big knobkerrie; with his big knobkerrie." (The word Saoole is pronounced Sah-ooli.) If a boy should get a stitch in his side while he is running he lies on the ground and asks another boy to rub, and pinch, and squeeze the place where

he feels the pain, then he gets up and continues running.

After a number of races had been run, it was decided to hold a wrestling match. The biggest boy on each side walked out into the middle of a group of onlookers, and after watching one another for a short time gripped one another in the approved fashion. A wrestler has to place one arm under and one over the arms of his rival; on no account may a boy place both his arms under those of his opponent so as to throw him. Wrestling is regarded as a test of strength and not of cunning, and so no one is allowed to trip up another, or to catch hold of his rival's leg; nor may he bite or use any personal violence while wrestling. Sometimes a big boy will wrestle with a little one for fun, but in such cases he will only use one arm, or else will wrestle while kneeling down, so as to give the boy a sporting chance. On no account would a boy ever think of fighting a girl, for if he did so he would for ever afterwards be regarded as a coward; and that is the worst name he could be called. So the wrestling matches went on in true sporting fashion, no one being regarded as defeated until the nape of his neck touched the ground.

Before the lads stopped their games for lunch,

they determined to have a good stand-up fight with sticks. A fight is the supreme delight of all black boys, but of course some excuse for the fight had to be invented. Makiwane therefore made a small mound of earth, and said to the assembled crowd, "That is the grandmother of Mcelu,"* mentioning the name of the biggest boy of the rival kraal. Having said this, he went up to the mound of earth and kicked it over in a contemptuous manner, saying, "Mcelu, your mother is an ugly old thing; and your grandmother is a crow; and all your people are witches and wizards; and as for you, you dirty tail of a dog, you're an old woman, and I'll hit you with your own stick; just point me out the direction of the hut in which your mother's brother was born." Though all this was only said in fun, it represented all the provoking things one boy says to another when he wants to make him angry. The challenge was at once taken up, and an equal number of boys from each kraal flew off and gathered up their sticks. The two sides were ranged up, the one opposite the other, the head-boys standing in front of their forces. After a little parrying and thrusting, the fight began in real earnest; and the noise of the sticks, and the

* The name means : A wagtail.

shouts of the combatants, could be heard far away in the distance. The fight went on for a long time, all showing extreme good humour in the way they ignored the blows they received. Makiwane's side soon began to get the better of their foes and drove them back inch by inch, until the weaker ones were thoroughly defeated. The bigger boys fought on until their sticks were broken, but it was not till then that they would own that they were defeated.

It is a rule in most of the tribes that the big herd-boys should harden their bodies so as to be able to go a long time without eating food ; they are therefore not supposed to return home for the midday meal. As a result, they are up to many tricks for getting food : they frequently milk the cows or goats when no one is looking, and take food from the gardens. If the grown-up people should make remarks about the small amount of milk the cows are giving, the boys have all sorts of excuses ready ; they say that the cattle have been eating certain plants which are believed to diminish the quantity of milk ; or they pretend that a sleepy lizard, called the *imbulu*, has been sucking the cows. The people firmly believe that this lizard sometimes drinks the milk, and so they are puzzled to know whether the boys are inventing the excuse or not.

However, to-day, Makiwane told Phiri to milk one of the cows so as to have plenty of food for the meal. One of the big boys had set a large trap and had caught a rock-rabbit and a cane-rat, so they had a splendid picnic, as Makiwane's sweetheart, Nontando, was told off to cook these animals. As they all sat down under the shade of the tree which formed the headquarters, they jabbered and chattered like monkeys about the glorious fun they had been having. Mahleka quite forgot about the Heavenly Maidens as with great exaggeration he explained again and again how he and Makiwane and Bombo had won the toboggan race. But his interest in the races, though it made him forget the Heavenly Maidens, in no way spoilt his appetite.

CHAPTER XIII

MORE FUN WITH THE HERD-BOYS

No sooner was the meal over than every one began to indulge in violent exercise. The girls began skipping, using ropes made of grass, while Phiri turned Catherine wheels, regardless of the heavy meal he had just eaten : it was the funniest sight to see Mahleka trying to imitate him, for he had eaten so much cane-rat that he could hardly run at all.

Makiwane proposed that they should play a game called *inzema*, and set to work to mark out a space about the length of a cricket pitch, placing at either end a boy to bowl a large pad of grass. All the others were drawn up at the side of the pitch and held pointed sticks which they threw like spears at the grass pad as it rolled past them. When a boy succeeded in hitting the passing ball he scored one, and changed places with one of the bowlers. Sometimes there was not a little squab-

bling as to whose stick it was that hit the passing pad, but Makiwane's decision was as final as that of any umpire. Phiri was extremely good at this game, and managed to make a great many more hits than anybody else. Mahleka did not play at all well, for he was rather small and was inexperienced in games that required much skill. Bombo was always too late when he threw his stick, and so always missed the object. Hobohobo remarked in a chaffing way that the pad of grass would need to be a very silly one before it would let itself be hit by *Umzingandhu* (or old Lazy Snake.) This was a nickname of Bombo's; for the *Umzingandhu* is a lazy snake that sleeps in the sun. The name, therefore, was very suitable to the old slowcoach, Bombo.

When this game had been played for a considerable time, Bombo suggested that they should play *ndoma*, which is very much like our hockey. Everybody ran off to the bush and broke off a stick, while Makiwane sent Hobohobo to hunt for a small lump of wood which had to do duty for a ball. In *ndoma* there are no goals, but every one hits or dribbles the ball in any direction he likes, seeing how long he can manage to keep it to himself. There are no sides, and so, just as in the

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case of the Caucus Race, any one can maintain that he has won. As a rule it is the big heavy boys like Bombo and Makiwane who play best, for they can charge the others out of the way.

While the boys were at their games, the girls played follow-my-leader on a patch of sand, though they did it in a way of their own. First of all a girl stood up while another came behind her, putting her hands on the shoulder of the first, then the third girl did the same as she stood behind the second. When the whole string of players was ready, the first girl started off, shuffling her feet in the sand, much in the fashion of a small white boy when he is pretending that he is a locomotive engine. She thus made a very wavy line, wriggling about in all directions; the others had to follow, keeping their feet in the marks that the first girl had made. When they had made a long wavy pattern in the sand, all the girls took their hands off the shoulders of those in front of them and tried to follow the first girl who raced along in the track she had already made.

When the boys had finished their games, they suggested that the girls should have a race. Black girls can sometimes run as fast as the boys, and can always beat them hollow with regard to such

things as lifting weights or carrying large vessels of water on their heads. After much discussion it was decided that the girls should run over the course used by the boys in the morning. There was a good deal of talking while the girls got ready for their race, and not a few false starts were made.

"Can't you be quieter," said Makiwane; "one might imagine you girls were having a talking race."

"And a very good race it would be too, ya! ya!" answered Nontando; "and who was it, I should like to know, made the most row at the tobaggan race this morning? So there!"

"Water is never tired of running," said Makiwane, quoting a saying he had heard his father use one day to a talkative wife.

In this first race all the girls competed, and Nontando and the biggest girl of the rival kraal ran a dead heat. Nontando, however, declared that she had won, but the boys maintained that the race was a tie, and that the two girls should have a water-carrying competition as a deciding match. This latter race was a very difficult one, for the two girls had to carry enormously heavy vessels of water on their heads without spilling the

liquid. There was much jabbering and squabbling before the rival girls were satisfied that their vessels were of the same weight : the boys could not help them in deciding this question because they could not lift the water-pots. Nontando, as we have seen, was a very pugnacious girl, and though she appealed to her sweetheart Makiwane, he very shrewdly refused to interfere, but left it to the girls to settle their own affairs for themselves. The two rivals stood out and toed the line, while several other girls helped them to lift the water-pots on to their heads, placing small bunches of leaves on the top of the vessels so as to prevent the liquid from spilling. This was an important precaution as the race was run over a very crooked course, and any girl spilling water from her pot would be disqualified.

The two girls started off amidst great applause. Though Nontando was not a very great favourite, yet some praised and clapped her because they were afraid she would be cross with them if they did not do so. All went well till the last thirty yards of the race : the two girls were very even and had run in splendid style ; but just at the close of the course, a few drops of water from Nontando's vessel were seen to fall on to the ground. She con-

tinued running, however, and came in first. At once there was a furious hubbub.

"I've won," shouted Nontando, "I've won."

"No you haven't," yelled the other; "it wasn't fair. You spilt some water."

"I am sure I didn't spill any water," screamed Nontando.

"I saw it fall: every one saw it fall—didn't you?" said the other girl, appealing to the onlookers.

"Yes, yes," was murmured on all sides.

"No I didn't spill any water, you little chit of a thing," shouted Nontando.

"I am every bit as old as you," roared the other.

I don't quite know how it happened, but the question as to whether the water was spilt or not gave place to an angry argument as to which of the two girls was the elder; from that they went on to discuss which of them could lift the heavier weights; then the question ceased to have anything to do with the race and made way for a discussion as to which of the girls was the prettier—a dangerous subject as it was apt to cause strife amongst the sweethearts.

Quarrels amongst women and girls are not

settled by fighting, consequently a meeting was held in which all the other girls took part. The debate was distinctly heated and soon became very personal. Nontando lost her temper and called the other girl all sorts of names, declaring she was a witch. The other girl denied the insult; and at last Nontando could contain herself no longer, but screamed out, "You're telling lies, you ugly thing, shut your rotten mouth." This was too much for the other girl, and at once there started a fierce scratching and biting match, while the boys looked on and left the girls to settle their own dispute. It might be thought that the boys ought to have interfered, but they knew that if they did that, all the girls would turn on them. And since boys never fight girls, there was nothing for it but to let them settle their quarrel in their own way. When the matter was thoroughly fought out, it was decided that Nontando was defeated in the race, not because she had spilled some water, but because she lost the scratching match. She had but few friends to stand by her, and was overpowered by the many girls who were only too glad to pay her out for the sharp unkind things she had often said about them.

The quarrel took such a long time to settle and

so engrossed the boys' attention that they forgot all about the oxen ; on going to look for them they found that one ox had been lost by the herd-boys of each kraal. Makiwane knew well that unless he could find his missing animal he would get a severe beating, and so he organised a regular search. Since some boys had to be sent to distant places it was necessary to draw lots. A number of pieces of grass were plucked so as to represent each boy, a knot being tied in one of the pieces. Makiwane held them in his hands, letting the ends project. The person who selected the piece of grass with the knot in it was then ordered to run to the farthest spot. Fresh pieces of grass were then picked and the lots were drawn again. When only two boys were left, one of them plucked a blade of grass and pressed it firmly between his thumb and finger while the other had to guess whether the grass would stick to the finger or thumb when these were separated.

After lots had been drawn, the boys all scattered over the country hunting for the lost oxen. As Makiwane and Mahleka—for the Bull had pleaded to be allowed to go with Makiwane—were hunting at the edge of the river, they saw the footmarks of an ox, and before long they traced the spoor

through a mass of dense bush to a place where there was some beautiful rich green grass at the water's edge. There they saw an ox—it belonged to the boys of the other kraal—drinking out of the river. They were about three hundred yards away, but as they looked at the animal, they suddenly saw the long, hideous jaws of a great crocodile dart out of the water and take firm hold of the snout of the ox. The poor animal put out its front legs in terror and struggled all it could to get free, bellowing and making the most piteous sounds. But the crocodile held on firmly and tugged with all its might, simply churning the water into froth by lashing its tail about. The two boys stopped breathless as they watched this fight; they knew they could do no good, for once a crocodile in the water has got firm hold of the snout of an ox there is very little hope. Inch by inch the ox was dragged into the river, though it tugged and bellowed all it could. As its snout was in the crocodile's mouth, it could never make use of its horns and so could not fight effectively. The remorseless crocodile kept on pulling steadily, knowing that every moment it would become more and more difficult for the ox to resist, and more and more easy for itself to drag the ox into the

water. At length the crocodile managed to pull the snout of the ox under the water and the animal was very soon drowned. It was carried under the surface and vanished completely from sight.

Makiwane and the Bull went and told their friends of the rival kraal about the fate of the lost bullock, and found that all the boys had returned from their search and yet had failed to find the other lost ox. Makiwane then told them all to hunt for a small insect called the Hottentot god (a mantis) which looks very much like a few pieces of bent straw or grass. Of course Phiri was the first to find one; he brought it to Makiwane who proceeded to divine with it in the following fashion. He put the Hottentot god on to a little twig which he held upright, and then disturbed the insect; he spoke to it very nicely, saying, "Please point out to us the direction in which the lost ox has strayed, for you are a clever fellow and know all about it." The insect revolved round and round the twig and finally came to rest with its head pointing in the direction of a distant hill. Makiwane then thanked it very courteously for pointing out the direction of the lost ox, and told Phiri to put the insect back where he had found it and on no account

to hurt it. Then, as the sun was getting low, he told two of the cattle-herds to drive the oxen home, and warned them to give no hint that one was missing. The other boys were all told to go by a different route, while Makiwane himself started off running to the distant hill where he thought the lost animal would be found. He hunted everywhere but failed to find any trace of the ox, so he thought to himself that he would sleep out in the bush all night, hoping that his father's rage would be quieted down by the next morning. But on second thoughts he decided to risk the thrashing and to return home in the dark. On his way he hunted for some small white stones which he swallowed, thinking he would thus harden his heart and be the better able to stand his punishment.

When he arrived at home he found the people at their evening meal, and slinking into the hut unobserved, set to work to find out whether the loss had been discovered. He began to talk in an offhand way to the two boys whom he had sent back with the cattle, and asked them whether any one had missed their sticks. The boys knew quite well that Makiwane was referring to the ox, and that he used the word "stick" merely as a blind so

as to put the grown-up people off the scent. This is a common trick of the boys. When he was told that nobody seemed to have noticed the loss of any sticks, he knew that his father had not discovered that one of the oxen had been lost, and Makiwane felt very relieved and began to eat his food without any anxiety. He asked the boys how they managed to escape detection, and spoke to them in a secret language which the grown-up people could not understand.

The actual form of this sort of slang-language varies from time to time, for if it were not constantly changed, the grown-up people would come to understand it. The boys have a language of their own that the girls cannot learn; and the girls speak a sort of "baby" language to one another which even the boys cannot understand. When black children go to school they invent all sorts of fanciful words, or change the meaning of well-known ones, so as to bamboozle the slow-witted teacher. For example, a native schoolmaster once told me that he was very puzzled what his pupils meant when they asked one another, "Have you kissed the slate?" At first he thought that they meant just what they said, and he was puzzled why any one should wish to kiss a slate: but he soon

found out that they were asking one another whether any one had written a letter—which they purposely called a slate—which might be passed down secretly during schooltime so as to make the lesson less dull. In a somewhat similar way, when natives wish to speak to one another about a white man when he is present, they refer to him as the “animal,” or the “beast,” and so carry on a conversation without their meaning being understood by the European. Boys in Natal make a secret language by adding “lande” to the chief syllable of a word ; they then skip the rest of the word and pick out the leading syllable of the next word to which they also add “lande.” It requires a great deal of practice to understand what boys are saying when they talk like this : but the moment the grown-up people begin to understand, the boys invent a new language by adding some other syllable, or by cutting the word in two and placing the last half of the word first. In Gazaland they cut the word in half and insert *tshini*, *tshino*, or *tshina* between the two syllables. Thus, in the Tshindao language, the phrase “Ask for fire” is *Kumbiro mwoto*. When the boys change this into their slang language it becomes *kumbitshinoro mwothsinoto*. The effect is most puzzling when

the words are spoken quickly. The boys have plenty of time to practise this language, and so they can talk quite easily before grown-up people without being understood.

Makiwane, therefore, carried on a long conversation with the boys, and laughed immoderately when they told him that they had tricked the men as they counted the cattle. The lads made so much noise during the meal that the old men told them not to make such a clatter ; but they kept on speaking in their secret language until they had made up their plan for hunting for the lost ox in the morning.

The meal was over, and the people were sitting round the fire, when one of the young men entered the hut and said he could hear the lowing of an ox in the distance. Makiwane's heart jumped into his mouth, for he knew he was in for a thrashing. In a moment all the men hurried out of the hut ; Makiwane slipped out in the confusion, ran off into the dark, for he was aware that if he returned to the hut that night he would be punished. The Chief knew each ox by its voice, and so he quickly discovered which one was lost. He called out for Makiwane, but the lad could not be found ; however, some one said he had seen the young rascal running off in the dark.

"So that's what you boys were talking about," said the Chief, "as you used your secret language. Ha ! ha ! Makiwane : I've beaten you * : I'll teach you a secret language you won't forget in a hurry."

He at once sent four or five men after the missing boy, while he himself went with a few others to find the lost ox, and having given these orders, he walked off into the darkness leaving all the boys shaking with fear.

Makiwane had hidden in an immense ant-bear hole about a quarter of a mile away from the kraal. The night was pitch dark so that he could see nothing as he peered out towards the kraal. He crouched down in his place of concealment, and heard the footsteps of four or five men, and soon caught broken bits of conversation such as : " Which way did the rascal go ? " " Won't we thrash him when we catch him ! " " The Chief will teach him a secret language that he won't forget in a hurry " ; " I expect he is hiding " ; " Which way did you say he went ? " and so forth. Then, as he looked out cautiously from his hiding-place, he could dimly see against the sky the black forms of four or five men coming towards him. He was so intent in watching

* That is to say, " You are as good as beaten," or, " You are in for a thrashing."

them that he scarcely noticed that there was something moving close to his foot. He shifted his position a little, and then distinctly felt something curling round his leg ; in a moment he knew that it was a snake that had been roused from its sleep. Cold as he was in the night air, he broke into a profuse perspiration, for he realised that if he tried to kill the snake, the noise he made would betray him to the men who were hunting for him. He also knew that if he moved, the snake would be alarmed and might attack him ; and not having brought a stick with him he felt it would be hopeless to fight the snake. He peeped out cautiously and saw that the men, who were moving very slowly, and who were examining the ground very carefully, had surrounded his hiding-place and would be sure to find him if he tried to escape ; he decided, therefore, to risk rather being bitten by the snake than being thrashed by the angry chief. The men came closer and closer till one stood but a few paces off. The snake by this time had coiled itself four or five times round his leg, and every moment Makiwane expected to feel its fangs. Just as he thought it was going to bite him, the man who was close to the hole stumbled over a stone and made a noise. To the immense relief of Makiwane he felt the

snake uncurl itself from his leg as, conscious of danger, it slid away into the *veld*. There was a sudden cry of "Snake! Snake!" as the men fled for their very lives. Since black men are very afraid of snakes, Makiwane was certain that no one would come out in his direction again; so he crept out of his hole and crawled along the ground on his hands and knees till he was far away from the kraal. When he knew he could not be seen or heard, he got up and ran away to the bush and hid himself. He had to spend the whole night in the open air as best he could, and regretted bitterly that he had left his blanket behind in the hut. It seemed to him that the night would never pass away, for the cold, and also the fear of wild animals, made it impossible for him to sleep. He thought enviously of the others, who were sitting round the fire listening to the grandmother telling fairy tales.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MAGIC BONES : FAIRY-TALE FOR THE FOURTH NIGHT

WHEN the search for Makiwane was given up, Mahleka's grandmother began to sing some nursery songs. The first was about the Boots of the Cockroach, and was set to the quaintest of dirges :

THE BOOTS OF THE COCKROACH

Those who have spaces between their front teeth,
There where the eagle puts his beads,
There where the fly carries a hat,
There where the cockroach wears boots,
There where the crow gets up and cooks,
There where the great hawk wanders abroad.

Mahleka, who had been looking up into her face, drinking in every word, made her sing this song three or four times over, and said, "I want to know where the fly gets its hat from, and I want to know what kind of boots the cockroach wears." As some of the girls told him to be quiet, he grew

more importunate and called out, "But I want to kno—o—o—ow." The grandmother simply said, "Now I'll sing you the song of the Jackdaw."

THE SONG OF THE JACKDAW

Crow, crow go home,
Jackdaw has eaten
Your babe's sour milk.
Jackdaw, jackdaw go home.
You will come back
At the new moon.

This was more than the Bull could stand, and he burst out, "But why did they let him drink the baby's milk? You won't let him drink my baby-sister's milk, will you? And why should the jackdaw come back at the new moon—I want to know, I want to know?" All the grandmother said was, "Now listen; I'll sing you another song."

THE ROAST DOG

Hallo there! noyoyo
What are you carrying about?
I am carrying the dog.
Where are you going to roast it?
I am going to roast it outside the kraal.
Why what is the matter with your home?
I fear the sores
The old people have,

They turn upside-down.
We are like upoyoyo
I got to Bubi's place,
They were cooking mealies;
I wanted to take some,
Then Luaxoba came.
When did he arrive?
The day before yesterday.
What did they kill for him?
They killed an inciyo.
An inciyo has no meat:
There is meat on a hippopotamus:
There is where those who eat are satisfied
And also their dogs.
Down to the pool with you.

When the grandmother had finished this nursery ditty she told the girls to sing the song of the Turkey-buzzard, while the boys sang the refrain.

THE TURKEY BUZZARD

The girls sang:

"I shall go, and at once
To my father's place."

The boys answered:

"Then go! then go!
You always talk so."

The boys bawled this answer with great glee, for they were thinking of the girls' squabble that had

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taken place early in the afternoon. When they had sung this refrain over a good many times, one of the big girls sang the nursery song called The Ears of the Serpent.

THE EARS OF THE SERPENT

Burn ! burn ! sun :
The ears of the serpents
Stand out.
Crush the mealies evenly
Zompotulo
There is the leathern girdle ;
You are being called from your house ;
Ziginya says " steady,"
He says we must eat quietly.

Mahleka, who had forgotten all about Makiwane, who was shivering in the cold and dark, now turned to the old grandmother to hear more about Skin-sore, and reminded her of her promise to tell two fairy tales ; but she said she was tired and sleepy and couldn't tell any tales, but would do so next night. There was a general cry of disappointment at this remark, and one of the big boys said he would give the old lady some nice snuff he had been given that day. He produced a small snuff-box, and emptied all the contents into the old woman's hands. Snuff has a great effect on black

people, and they love it even more than smoking tobacco, for it wakes them up thoroughly and refreshes them. The grandmother took a small spoonful of the mixture—a pinch of snuff would have been quite useless—and sniffed it up until she sneezed violently. She then called out “Chiefs!” for it is thought very unlucky to sneeze without saying this. In a moment or two she was wide awake, and became quite lively and talkative. She decided that she would tell the story of Skin-sore and the Magic Bones; and since tales of magic appeal to all black people, even the old men stopped talking and listened to her story.

SKIN-SORE AND THE MAGIC BONES

A man once had a wife and six children. He went to hoe in his garden, but said to Skin-sore, “Stay in the garden and watch the baboons; if they eat anything I will drive you away.”

“Did you ever see a man driven away,” said the child, “because the baboons had eaten something?”

“Well,” said the father, “if they *do* eat anything I shall drive you away; that’s all!”

So the child continued setting traps on the

borders of the fields, and the baboons said, "We are coming."

Come they did, and one of them was caught in a trap. When Skin-sore was about to kill it, the animal said, "Don't kill me; I will give you something I've got."

"I don't want your thing," replied Skin-sore.

"Not if I give you something nice?" said the baboon.

"Well, give it me that I may see," replied the youngster.

So the child was given some magic bones, with the instruction, "Take these bones of mine and make invocation with them, saying, 'Here let there come forth porridge.'"

So the child performed the invocation, and porridge came forth.

"If you are driven away by your father," said the baboon, "go into the heart of the bush and build your kraal there, and be a chief."

"Very good," replied the child; "I will let you go."

"When you have released me," said the baboon, "please give me one of those mealie grains."

"Break off all of them," said the boy.

So the baboon broke off all the mealies.

When the father came he said, "The baboons have been eating; where are they?"

"I was here all the time," replied the boy; "the baboons are too much of a good thing. For all my watching they eat the mealies even when I am here."

"Very well," replied the father; "you can go away into the bush; I don't want you here any more."

Off ran Skin-sore into the bush to build his kraal there, taking ten days on his journey. When he came to a spot where there were no trees, and where it was nice and open, he started tying the grass into knots. This he did for ten days. Then he brought forth his magic bones and invoked with them, saying, "Here let there come forth a lot of people."

He threw the bones, and there came forth many people, who saluted him saying, "Thou art our Lord; 'tis thou who hast created us."

Then he married and begat children, hiding his magic bones in the earth.

"Hi, Mother," said one of the children, "how did my father get such a kraal as this?"

"Your father got it," said the mother, "by invoking with his magic bones."

"Please show me where they are," said the child, "that I may see those bones."

So the child was shown those bones, and ran off with them into the heart of the bush. He tied the grass in knots with the words, "Here let there come forth a host of people, and let my father's people come here too, that my father may be left all alone and be a beggar."

So he threw the bones, and out came the people, leaving his father all alone and destitute. The child was then hailed as chief, while the father was left crying. Up came a rat and said to Skin-sore, "What are you crying about?"

"I am crying for my magic bones," said he, "which have been stolen from me."

"If you saw any one who could get them for you what would you give him?" said the rat.

"Suppose it were you, O Rat, I would give him porridge-scrapings and pumpkin seeds."

Then up came a hawk and said. "What are you crying about?"

"I was crying," said Skin-sore, "over my magic bones which have been stolen."

"Suppose one were to get them for you, what would you give him?" asked the hawk.

"Were it you, for instance," said Skin-sore,

"I would give him as many small chickens as he wished."

So off started the rat and the hawk. On the way the hawk said to the rat, "Let me take hold of you, rat, and fly with you, for so we shall get there quickly."

"Very well," said the rat, "take hold."

So the hawk nipped up the rat and flew with it till it came to the kraal of the boy, where it let go its hold. The rat entered the hut of the child who had taken those bones, and smelt about until it found where the bones were. Then it dug them up and took them outside the hut. The people upon this began to cry out, "Hi, a rat has come forth with the bones; what is it running away with them for?"

But the hawk swooped down upon the rat and flew off with it, while the people cried out, "The hawk has flown off with the magic bones!"

So the rat and the hawk went to the rightful owner of the bones and returned them to him. At once he invoked with them saying, "Let there come forth a number of small chickens." Many chickens appeared till the hawk said, "Stop, that's enough."

After this Skin-sore invoked with the magic bones

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saying, "Here let there come forth porridge-scrappings and pumpkin seeds."

He threw the bones and the things desired came forth. Then he invoked again with the bones saying, "Let my kraal return to me, all of it, and let my child be left a beggar."

So he threw the bones, and his kraal and all the people returned and hailed him as chief. The child who had taken the bones also came, but the father forbade him saying, "Come here no more; once you robbed me of my bones. If you come here I shall kill you."

So the child returned, leaving his father in possession of his chieftainship and honour.

As soon as this story was over, all clamoured for a second one. The grandmother thought for a few moments and then said, "Now I'll tell you how Skin-sore caught the elephant."

HOW SKIN-SORE CAUGHT THE ELEPHANT

A long time ago a man found that people were always trying to run away with his daughter, so he said, "Now, how shall I stop this?" He got some charcoal and ground it up and added water to it

till he made a nice stiff paste, and then he smeared his whole body with it. Having done this, he took his bow, and placing in his quiver arrows that had no points on them, went off to his garden. There he found a man who was waiting to kidnap his daughter. But when the thief saw a man covered with charcoal coming towards him, he was frightened and took to his heels. And it so happened to all the people who came with the intention of stealing the girl; they were all put to flight by the charcoal which the man had smeared on his body. Said the people, "We shall never get that girl over there, because her father is a terror; he is too black for anything!"

At last young Skin-sore said, "Let me too have a try to get her." So off he started with his two sticks. When he arrived at the garden, out came the father to drive Skin-sore away, but the child stood his ground. Then the man let fly his arrows at Skin-sore, but the arrows missed the boy. Skin-sore then took his stick, and, brandishing it in the air, gave that man a beating. When the man came at him again, Skin-sore hit him on the knee, and finished up by threatening to kill him with the stick. Then the father besought him saying, "Do not kill me: I am father of that child."

"Well," said Skin-sore, "why is your body like that?"

"It's like this," said the man, "because I made a plan to smear the whole of my body with charcoal in order that people, when they saw me, might be afraid of me and so leave my child in peace."

"Well," said Skin-sore, "I am going to take that child of yours."

"What will you give me," asked the father, "if you take my child?"

"Whatever you like," said Skin-sore.

"Well," said the man, "the person who is to marry my daughter must catch an elephant and bring it me alive."

"I will go and have a look for one," said Skin-sore.

So off he went with the girl.

When he arrived at his kraal the people congratulated Skin-sore saying, "How did you manage to conquer that man?"

"Ah," said Skin-sore, "I conquered him. It was her father all the time who was frightening us with charcoal. And now I am off to catch an elephant."

"Do you—you who are a Skin-sore—know how to catch an elephant?" said the people.

"Well," said Skin-sore, "why do you speak thus,

seeing that you all fled from her father ? Isn't it I that have gained possession of that girl ? And if I won the girl, shall I not also manage to get the elephant ? ”

“ All right, go,” said the people ; “ and we will see whether you will get one or not.”

So off he went.

Coming to where a number of elephants were gathered together, Skin-sore twisted a tiny piece of cord and went to an elephant, which he bound with that piece of cord ; and drawing the animal after him, he brought it back home.

“ Oh ! ” said the people. “ Skin-sore has actually got the elephant. We thought he wasn't good for anything : it seems that he is some good ; for we who are proper people—did we ever catch an elephant ? ”

“ I am going to make you all wonder,” said Skin-sore.

So he took the elephant to his wife's father and said, “ Here is that elephant you wanted.” To which the father-in-law replied, “ All right ; take my child.” So the boy took the girl home and built her a hut, and they called their first child “ Elephants.”

“ My child,” said Skin-sore, “ do as I did who

caught an elephant all by myself, because I had no friend to help me; had I had a friend I should have got him to help me to catch the elephant; my child shall catch elephants also." So his child started catching elephants.

"Seeing that you are killing us," said the elephants, "we want to know whether your father killed us for mere sport. Did not your father catch us so that he might gain a wife by us? But you have come to kill us for no such reason. Why do you do so? If you continue to kill us for no reason, a champion will come to take our part."

Now this champion elephant had heard that its fellows were being killed, so it ran to where Skin-sore lived and said, "I say, Skin-sore, when you caught us in the former days, did not you do it in order that you might get married?"

"What's the matter?" said Skin-sore.

"Well," said the champion of the elephants, "your child has been killing my fellows, and I am going to protect them."

So off it went to its fellow elephants, and coming to them said, "I hear that you are perishing at the hands of Skin-sore's son."

In the meanwhile Skin-sore's wife went off to her own home saying to her husband, "I am no longer



SKIN-SORE'S SON CATCHING ELEPHANTS.

going to live with you because my father has had no present from you of anything to eat since the day that you gave him that elephant. It is all because your child has cleared the forest of all the other elephants : now I am going to my home."

So off she went, and was greeted by her father with the words, "I am glad you have come."

Said the people, "Skin-sore, did you ever see a man who got a wife by means of an elephant—a mere creature of the bush. Can it give a man a bride?"

So then Skin-sore was very angry with his child saying, "Why did you kill the elephants?"

And that is why people have stopped getting wives by means of elephants, because long ago the woman fled from Skin-sore who was left without a wife.

As the end of this story of Skin-sore was not very interesting, the children had grown sleepy and were quite ready to go to bed. But Mahleka and Phiri had hidden a lump of clay at the back of the hut, and when no one was looking they took it to bed with them. The grown-up people do not like the children to take their dolls to bed with them, and that is why the boys love to hide a

little piece of clay so as to play with it in the dark. As soon as the people had all fallen asleep, Mahleka and Phiri brought out their clay, and keeping as quiet as mice, began to make some oxen and sheep. But after playing in the dark for a short time they grew tired and fell asleep.

THE FIFTH DAY

CHAPTER XV

MISCHIEF AT THE PEMPE

"I SAY Phiri!" whispered the Bull the moment he awoke, "I wonder if Makiwane has come back. Let's go and see." The Chief had just removed the door so as to let in the light, and as he turned round before going into the open air, he suddenly burst into laughter saying, "What on earth has the child been doing with himself?"

Half a dozen sleepy heads were at once poked out from under the blankets, and then there arose a general chorus of laughter—and no wonder. The clay that the Bull and Phiri had taken to bed over-night with them had been very damp, and Mahleka was smeared from head to foot with the dirty grey earth. He presented the most comical appearance, for being utterly unconscious that he had made himself in a mess, he showed

the soberest of faces. However, it was no use pretending he had taken no clay to bed overnight, for the evidence was obvious to all. Mahleka's grandmother, shaking with laughter, took a vessel of water and cleaned up the comical-looking urchin, telling him not to take clay to bed another night. As soon as he was washed, he ran off with Phiri to hunt for Makiwane.

The big herd-boy had plenty of time to think ; and so when the day broke his plan was quite clear. He hid in some bush close to the kraal in such a way that he could see all that went on without being observed. At last, after what seemed to him endless waiting, he noticed Mahleka and Phiri hunting for him. He told them that he would stay where he was until the cattle were led off to pasturage, and would then walk out in front of the cattle just as if nothing had happened.

Black men do not keep their anger for long, and when the Chief saw Makiwane walk quite unconcernedly in front of the oxen, he laughed to himself and told the men who were looking on that since the ox had been found he would not thrash the boy, especially as he had been punished quite enough by having to sleep in the bush all night. As soon as Makiwane was told this by a boy who

overheard the Chief talking, he knew the subject would never be referred to again, and promptly sent a small fag back to the kraal to beg a little food from the women.

To black people it frequently seems as if white parents were rather cruel in the way they punish their children. A Kafir once said to me, "We black people do not look at these things as white men do; they are content to punish the person who has done wrong, but we try to cure him." I told him this was excellent, and asked him how they did this; he said this was easily done if only the name of the boy were known. The Kafir takes a large earthenware pot and fills it with water; when this is boiling furiously, the pot is uncovered and medicines are thrown into the water. The people then shout out the name of the boy at the boiling medicine, repeating it many times. When they feel sure that the name has well penetrated into the water, they cover the pot and place it on one side for several days. There is no need to punish the boy, for this charm most conveniently cures him of his evil habit.

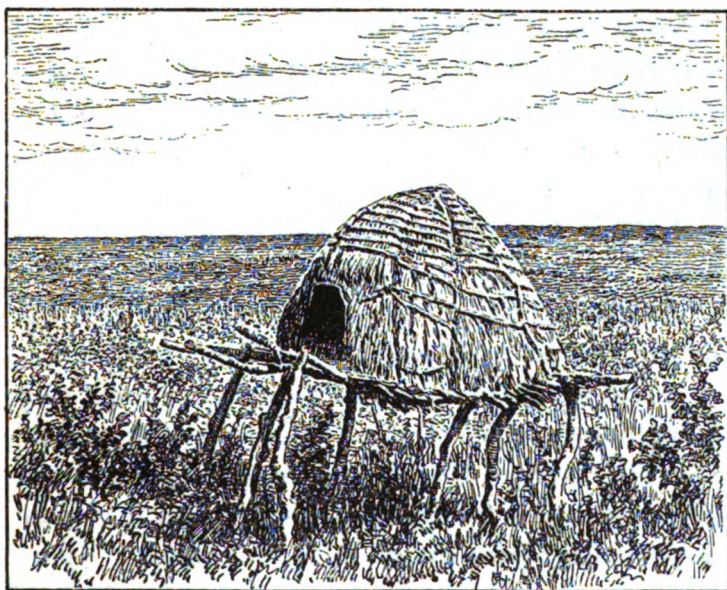
When Mahleka and Phiri left Makiwane, they ran home for breakfast, the Bull suggesting that they should spend the day trying to catch wild

cats. But on reaching home they found all their friends busy, for the Chief had told them that all the *Pempes* were in order, and that every small boy and girl in the kraal must now spend their days frightening the birds from the crops.

No sooner does the crop of Kafir corn begin to ripen than thousands of small birds flock to devour the grain, which is a little bigger than hemp-seed and of a beautiful russet-brown colour. All the small boys and girls have therefore to spend the entire day from sunrise to sunset among the crops, so that they may scare away the birds. The first few days of such work are very pleasant, but the fun and novelty soon wear off. However, even in the dullest times the children find plenty of amusement. To make the work pleasant and easy, and to shield the watchers from the very hot sun, the men build small huts of grass and stick, often placing them on platforms raised four or five feet above the ground. (You can see what these *pempes* are like by looking at the picture.) As a rule these tiny huts are built at the edges of the gardens on hillocks that overlook the ripening fields, though sometimes they are built in the very centre of the cornfields.

As this was the first day of scaring the birds, all

were delighted with the thought of the fun they were going to have ; for they were given plenty of food to take with them, to say nothing of the fact that the boys were secretly discussing all sorts of



A PEMPE

mischief. The Bull therefore found everybody talking about the plans for the day.

There were several fields to be watched and so the children were divided up into several groups. As they all ran off to the fields, they made a

perfect babel of noise ; all that could be heard was a jumble of voices calling out (I translate their names): "Hi, there! *Father of War!* wait for the *Whistler* and *In the Mouth*"; "I say, *Wag-tail!* wait for old *Nasal Bones*, *Wolf*, and *Laughter*;" "*Night!* is *Mother of Death* there with you?" "I say *Rain!* tell *Grass* to wait for *We are being Laughed at* and for *Tear*"; "*There is no one left!* have you brought that calabash? Oh then, give it to *Lung-sickness*"; "*Figs!* are *Trouble* and *When I am Dead We shall See* coming to our field?"

As the jabbering bird-scarers ran along in single file they began to choose the head-boy for the day. A number of names were suggested, but they unanimously decided on Bombo. As he walked along the narrow footpath he began to sketch out his programme for the day, and just as a general disposes his forces so did he lay his plans. By far the most important thing was to decide which of the boys could run the fastest, for it was necessary that the two best runners should be set apart to steal *imfi*, which is a sweet reed very much like sugar-cane. Bombo therefore selected two big, quick runners for this most important business. Then he told two smaller boys that they were

to set bird-traps, Mahleka being allowed, at his special request, to try and catch some mice and rats with melon-seed. But Phiri was told that he was to take Hobohobo with him and to get some milk from the cows belonging to another kraal—a very difficult matter, because he would have to outwit the herd-boys, who would thrash him if he fell into their hands. With regard to the girls, Bombo told his sweetheart Tiye to stay at the *pempe* so as to superintend the cooking, while the rest were ordered to take up their position at different parts of the field and to keep up a loud sing-song noise all day. This was to be done first of all to disarm all suspicion that the grown-up people might have that the youngsters were up to tricks, for unless the noise were kept up all day the men would think that the children were brewing mischief; and secondly—it was quite a secondary point in Bombo's estimation—to frighten the birds. One boy was told off to act as special orderly to Bombo, who intended to lie down in the shade all day at the *pempe*, from which point of vantage he intended to superintend his forces and issue his orders. Thus as soon as the children arrived at the fields they all knew just what they had to do, and were all eager to start on their work, which

had the charm of novelty, since no one had been doing it for nearly a year.

The *pempe* which Bombo selected as his headquarters was a small, flimsy hut raised on stout poles about six feet from the ground. It was built on a mound at the edge of a great field of Kafir-corn, and commanded a good view of the country. The floor was made of poles, over which an old grass mat was laid as a sort of carpet. The hut was big enough for about five children to crowd in at one time, and the thatch was sufficiently thick to keep out the heat of the sun. Just outside the doorway it had a little platform (or primitive verandah), on which four children could sit comfortably, but for the present Bombo decided that he would lie down on it himself, allowing Tiye to sit at the edge, dangling her legs in the air. She served Bombo like a faithful dog, feeling it a privilege to attend to the slightest wish of her sweetheart.

A small section of the party went off to a *pempe* that had been built at the other side of the enormous field, and before long the girls were scaring the birds with their monotonous chant.

The two big boys who were to steal the sugarcane pointed out to Bombo that since it had been

raining recently, the ground would retain the marks of their footsteps, and that, therefore, it would be well if he could let them have two or three other small boys who might help to confuse the spoor they left, and also to divert the attention of the owner of the sugar-cane, should he give chase. So three others were added to the party. These five boys started off to a distant field where the owner of another kraal took special care to cultivate unusually good sugar-cane. As they went along they practised their tricks for misleading those who might try to trace them by their footmarks. They accordingly began to walk backwards, looking over their shoulders, and thus left reversed footmarks on the ground, so as to put the owner off the scent. At first it was not at all easy to walk in this fashion, but a little practice made all of them, with the exception of the biggest boy, expert. It was decided that he should be used further to deceive the owner of the sugar-cane; to do this he had to act as a decoy: he was to pick no *imfi*, but was to let all the others escape when pursued, remaining behind on purpose to allow himself to be caught.

When they had thoroughly practised their trick, they walked on in the ordinary way, plaiting a quantity of grass string, as it would be needed later

on. When they neared the fields of sugar-cane they began to walk backwards, the eldest boy alone walking in the ordinary fashion so as partly to trample out and confuse the footmarks left by others in the damp pathway. Thus they gained the field and gathered a good supply of *imfi*, and having cut it into short lengths, bound it with the grass string round their shins, thighs, and chests, carefully leaving the joints free. They then put on their blankets so as to conceal the stolen goods.

They were preparing to leave the garden when they saw the owner approaching, so they crouched down and hid themselves in the tall sugar-cane. The man, however, noticed the footmarks all indicating that some boys had recently left his gardens; and looking at the field of *imfi* he noticed that the tops of the plants were waving in a suspicious manner at a certain spot. So he said to himself, "Ha, ha, my fine fellows, so you are going to follow your companions who have recently left the field, are you? I know your tricks. But I also know a trick worth two of yours! I will just hide where I am in this tall grass at the edge of the path and pounce on you as you pass by." Assured of his cleverness he hid in such a way that he could see people leaving his fields. He had been in hiding

for a few minutes, expecting to see the boys leave the field close to him, when he awoke to the fact that five boys were already a little distance from the field, having left it at the other side. It suddenly flashed upon him that the young rascals had been bamboozling him ; and though they were now walking through the long grass which completely hid their legs, he suspected they had been stealing his sugar-cane. So he shouted to them to stop, and gave chase. The decoy crouched in the grass and hid himself, while the four boys who were laden with sugar-cane fled in four different directions, thus distracting the man who did not know which of them to pursue. He grew very excited and shouted after them, declaring they were young thieves and that he would thrash them within an inch of their lives. The decoy got up and began to run in a very stiff, awkward way, as though he were impeded in his running by things tied round his legs. He then pretended to tread upon a thorn and hobbled along as if in pain. The owner of the gardens therefore let the four boys go their own way, feeling sure he should catch the worst thief. The decoy played the game well ; when caught, he drew his blanket very tightly round his body as though he were anxious to conceal something.

The infuriated man told the young rogue to strip off his blanket ; but the lad pretended to be very unwilling to do this, for he wanted to gain time for his friends. By this the man was but confirmed in his suspicions ; for the boys as a rule roam about the country carrying their blankets on their arms. But as soon as the decoy noticed that all the other four boys had escaped to cover, he allowed the man to remove his blanket and to search his body. Of course not a trace of sugar-cane could be found ; and while the man was scratching his head and apologising for his groundless accusations of theft, the boy walked off in assumed anger, and ran to the *pempe* by a long, circuitous route, going in the wrong direction until he was out of sight to his pursuer. When safe from detection, he wended his way round by a long detour till finally he reached the *pempe* to find all the boys chewing the cane as hard as they could, and chatting at the same time in high spirits about the success of their stratagem.

The decoy was praised very highly and received an extra share of the food to compensate him for the risky game he had played. The boys, who had enjoyed their exciting adventure, thought they had never tasted sugar-cane that was so sweet. Peals

of laughter were heard by the watchers on other *pempes* as the decoy told of his experiences; and everybody began to think that scaring birds was fine fun. The girls thought so too, for they shared in the spoil, Bombo's sweetheart receiving an extra share of sugar-cane, much to the envy of the others.

The boys who had been drafted off to set traps only produced three birds, and declared that they found them restless and shy owing to the noise made by the girls. They managed to catch ten birds—so they asserted—but added that some herd-boys had been watching them secretly, and had pounced down on them and had stolen all the birds except the three. Bombo was so stupid that he had not the slightest suspicion that the boys were telling a lie; but Tiye, who was as clever and smart as Bombo was dull and slow, whispered to her sweetheart that these two boys had eaten the other seven birds themselves, and that this could be proved by the fact that there were stains of half-cooked blood on their faces. Bombo therefore cross-questioned the culprits, who showed some self-made bruises on their limbs, which they said had been caused in the scuffle with the herd-boys. Bombo decided that they were telling lies, and that

they had been secretly eating food that should have been shared all round. He told them to strip off their blankets at once, and gave them a good sound thrashing which they received in silence. After they had been beaten, they freely confessed that they had eaten the birds.

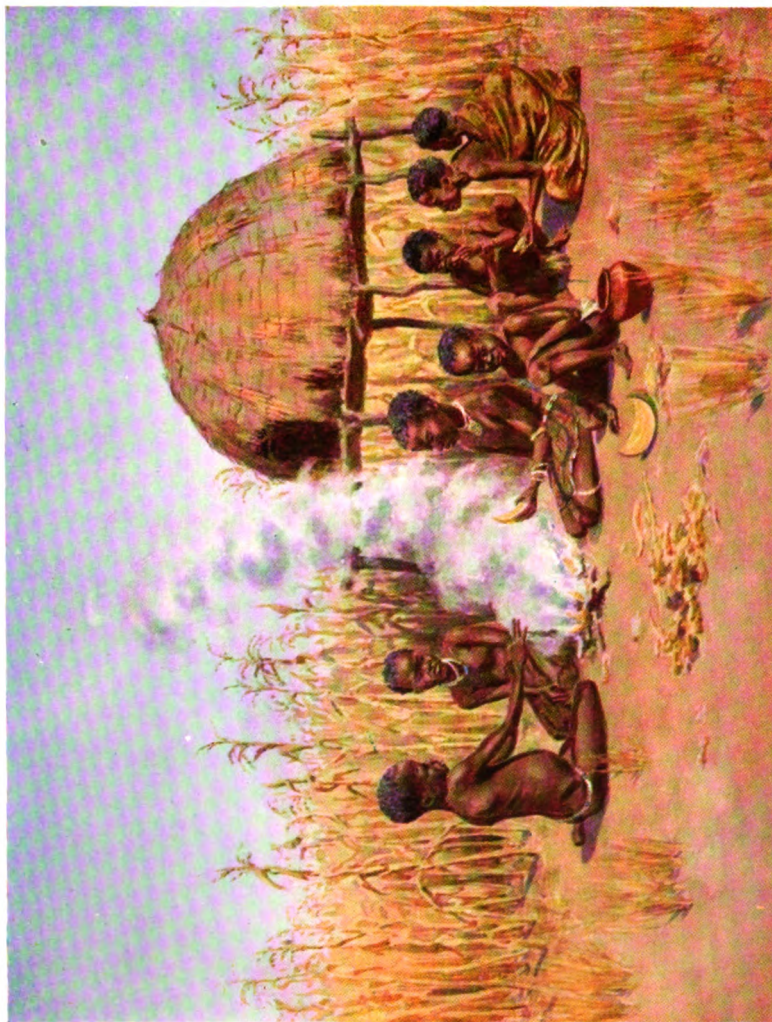
The Bull of the Kraal arrived while the thrashing was going on and thoroughly enjoyed seeing the boys punished, for he looked down with scorn upon their baseness and meanness. He proudly produced some three or four rats that he had caught with melon-seed, as well as a bird that looked more like a big cacoon than anything else. Mahleka had persuaded a friend to give him some bird-lime, and not only had he caught the bird, but he had also managed to catch himself, for he was smeared all over with bird-lime; it had got into his hair, into his blanket, all over his body, and had tied up the bird to his left hand so tightly that it was difficult to get it out. For the rest of the day his fingers clung together when they touched one another, and even Nokofa found it impossible to clean him. But Mahleka did not mind his stickiness; the only thing that gave him real trouble was the fact that the feathers of the bird had to be destroyed; this was a great calamity,

for not only was there so much the less to eat, but the bird also lacked the flavour of singed feathers which he loved.

The girls in the meantime had collected some pumpkins and green mealies—the latter are regarded even by white people as a great delicacy—and were busy roasting them over a fire. There was no need for them to steal these things, for when the children are watching the fields they are allowed to take from their own gardens what food they need; indeed, they often refuse to go to the *pempes* unless they are well fed. So what with sugar-cane, a few birds, three rats, pumpkins, and green mealies, they managed to make a right royal meal.

Phiri had also managed to get some milk, though he found it a difficult task, having to hide in a tree for a long time all in vain; for though the herd-boys were running races yet they kept a very bright look-out on their cattle. As it was impossible to catch them unawares, Phiri set a trap for them, seeking to catch them by guile. Knowing that the herd-boys would be very thirsty after their races, he gave a bundle of sugar-cane to one of his sisters, telling her to stay at a *pempe* that was not far from the cattle-herds though it was

out of view of the grazing cattle. She was told not to offer it to the lads until she received a signal from Phiri, who, taking Hobohobo with him, crept up close to the cattle under cover of some thick bushes. The two boys had to wait quite an hour, and in the meantime made themselves as comfortable as they could. They sat down and played a game with stones for it made but little noise. When they were absorbed in their game, they suddenly heard a puffing, hissing noise—very much like that produced when a leaky pair of bellows is being used. The boys at once knew that it was a puff-adder. Nothing could have shown more clearly the different character of the two boys. Hobohobo vanished like a streak of lightning, and in a moment was thirty paces away, while Phiri with equal quickness took up his two sticks. The puff-adder raised its big, bloated body, and prepared to strike, but Phiri held it off with one of his sticks while he brought the other down with a tremendous whack that broke the backbone of the snake. Having done this, he cut off the head, so as to give it to the Diviner to make into medicine. Even then Hobohobo seemed afraid to come near. Phiri laughed at his cowardice, and



THE GIRLS AT THE PEMPE.

The two boys sat down again and watched the herd-boys for about half an hour. When Phiri saw that they had finished their races, he gave the signal to his sister, while he and Hobohobo crouched down behind some shrubs close to the cattle. Phiri's sister shouted out to the cattle-herds, saying she had some very nice sugar-cane to give them. They told her to bring it to them ; but she said that she was not allowed to leave her *pempe*. The unsuspecting herd-boys swallowed the bait, and instead of sending one of their number to fetch the food, all ran off pell-mell to see who could grab most of the coveted *imfi*. The girl very smartly made the big boys squabble, by giving one of them much more *imfi* than she gave to the others : thus she gained time for Phiri. The two boys who were lying in ambush darted out from their hiding-place. Phiri caught hold of the horns of a cow before she was aware that anything was wrong : he shoved her head on to the ground and placed his knee between her horns, while Hobohobo hurriedly milked the animal into a broken pot he carried under his blanket. As soon as they got what they wanted, they disappeared

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into the bush. The herd-boys had been quarrelling with the girl for giving them such a little sugar-cane, and wasted time by hunting all over the *pempe* to see whether she had concealed some of it in the thatch: when they got back to their cattle, all they noted was that one of the cows seemed very restless: they thought no more of it until it was found at milking-time that the cow gave scarcely any milk. Thus did Phiri once more outwit the big herd-boys and provide milk for the midday meal.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BULL OF THE KRAAL AND A HIPPOPOTAMUS

DURING the picnic dinner Phiri caused great amusement by telling how Hobohobo had been frightened by the puff-adder. The latter, however, indignantly denied the accusation, and said that it was Phiri who ran away in terror, and it was all very well for him to pretend that he had not been afraid. Of course, nobody believed Hobohobo, because it was well known that Phiri was the pluckier boy of the two; but all the same Phiri determined to take his revenge later on.

When the meal was over Hobohobo was sent away by Bombo to carry a message, and then Phiri explained his plan to Mahleka and Bombo. He carried them all off to the place where the bird-traps were, for it was just on the edge of the bush, and arranged with his friends that they should all sit down with their backs touching the

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The plan worked to perfection. In a moment Hobohobo's face turned from chocolate to a dirty, ashy grey; he ran away for his life, and did not stop till he was twenty yards away from the supposed snake. When he looked back he saw a dozen boys rolling on the ground with laughter.

and Phiri pushing his way through the bushes. For many weeks to come, whenever Hobohobo was inclined to brag, one of the boys would merely hiss like a puff-adder: nothing more was needed to bring this bully to his senses.

Soon after Hobohobo had been paid out thus, one of Mahleka's big brothers came to the *pempe* and said he was going out in the canoe to set some fish-traps, and that if Mahleka would promise not to wriggle about he might come along with him for a treat. Mahleka and a small cousin hurried off with three big brothers, and after walking a good long distance came to the place where the river emptied itself out into a beautiful lake some ten miles across.

The canoe had been scooped out of the trunk of a mahogany tree, and was therefore called a "dug-out." It was a very wobbly, tipply affair, the shape of which you can see by looking at the picture. The eldest brother stood in the front holding a long spear in his hand, for he was going to try and stab some fish; another brother took a paddle and sat close to him; while behind them came Mahleka and his small cousin; and right at the back of the boat sat the other big brother, who held the steering paddle.

As the canoe was starting out from the bank a number of kingfishers, with the most brilliant blue feathers, darted about in the sunshine; while a little way off two beautiful golden-crested cranes could be seen standing on a sandbank preening their wings. They were covered with spotlessly white feathers, and had the most delicate golden topknots spread out fan-shape on their heads. Away in the distance were myriads of flamingoes floating on the lake, and looking like a great patch of snow on the blue-grey water. The moment they saw the canoe moving towards them they rose from the water, and as they did so their colour seemed slowly to change. First of all it looked as if a patch of the sky were turning a delicate pink, but as the immense flock flew higher up in the air the beautiful red breasts of the flamingoes shone brighter and brighter in the sun, and what had been but a patch of white on the water had become changed to a deep crimson stain in the sky.

A little farther on the canoe reached a spot where the bank was riddled with small holes, each of which was the nest of a martin or swallow. The birds, whose backs were a beautiful green, sat at the mouths of their nests, and owing to their numbers broke the monotony of the orange-red

bank with a patch of soft green colour. But as the canoe approached them they too flew off, and in doing so showed their rich magenta wings and breasts, while the green of their backs vanished as if by magic.

But Mahleka and his friends had no eyes for these beautiful sights, for on a sandbank ahead of them there lay a dozen huge, ugly, loathsome crocodiles sleeping in the sunshine. The man in the front of the canoe turned round and held up his hand to warn the others to be quiet. He then picked up an assegai from the bottom of the boat, and, poising it carefully in the air, waited till the canoe had silently drifted to within a few yards of the animals. He then sent the assegai shivering through the air plump into the body of one of the sleeping crocodiles. In a moment the brutes were all awake, and, lifting their long and loathsome bodies, scuttled off into the water, the wounded crocodile also disappearing beneath the water with the assegai sticking out of its body. The eldest brother turned to Mahleka, and told him to be very careful not to upset the boat.

Now Mahleka had brought with him one of his clay-oxen; and he evidently thought the best way to keep still was to play with his toy. He therefore

The canoe was now steered straight for the fish-traps, which were made very much like our English lobster-baskets. When the party arrived at the place in the river where their traps had been fixed

up, they found another dug-out full of people who were examining another set of traps. After the men had emptied them and had placed the fish in the bottom of their canoe, they sat chatting with Mahleka's brothers. When they were in the middle of their conversation, a man on the bank made signs to them and pointed in the direction of a deep pool round a bend in the lake. Cautiously steering their canoes out from the fish-traps, they looked in the direction pointed out to them, and there, about five hundred yards away, they could just see the snout of a hippopotamus rising a few inches out of the water. Plans were immediately made to hunt the animal. Advancing noiselessly, they got to within about fifty yards of the unsuspecting hippopotamus without being detected. Then there was a little eddy in the water, a few bubbles of air, and the animal was gone. The two canoes, which had been joined by a third that had come down to share the sport, closed in very cautiously, all the men holding assegais ready for action. The suspense was great as a dozen keen pairs of eyes watched the surface of the water for the first sign of the monster. Minutes seemed hours as the people in the three canoes waited for some sign of the animal. Little were they expecting what actually happened. The

By the time Mahleka got out of the canoe to return home, he felt he had had a splendid afternoon's fun, for he had been ducked close to a number of crocodiles, and had seen his friends pitched head-over-heels through the air into the water by a hippopotamus.

When he returned to the *pempe*, he found that his friends had been spending the afternoon walking on stilts, chasing birds with slings and stones, and playing with a swing that they had fixed up under a tree.



THE HIPPOPOTAMUS HUNT.

The girls had made a number of dolls ; and before the sun began to set a move was made for home, the boys listening to Mahleka's description of his adventures, the girls carrying their dolls on their backs under their blankets, pretending they were carrying real babies.

When they reached home, they found that the supper was not nearly ready. They therefore walked about the kraal and began to watch the women, who were grinding grain; some of the smaller children trying to catch the shadows cast by the setting sun on the mud walls of the hut.

"Why, child," said one of the women, "what have you got there on your back under your blanket?"

"Only my baby," said Tiye. "She's fast asleep and doesn't want any supper."

"Your baby?" said the women ; "whatever do you mean, child?"

"My *clay*-baby," said Tiye.

At this the women laughed, for they remembered the days when they used to carry dolls under their blankets ; they recollected that sometimes they were devoted to their dolls, but that at other times they used to have periods of coldness towards them, punishing them by giving them no food, or by

leaving them out in the bush all night for a week at a time. They remembered also that when they had sufficiently punished their dolls for their supposed naughtiness, they used to treat them with great tenderness, carrying them about on their backs for days together, making small clay dishes, and pots, and spoons, so that the dolls might have their playthings.

While the supper was being cooked, the tiny baby, who had been born a few days before, was given its evening meal. Since this was much better fun than playing with dolls, a large crowd of on-lookers gathered round the infant. For the first few days of their lives, black babies are fed on sour curds which black people think very much nicer than sweet milk and much more wholesome, though the babies don't think so. The mother, therefore, took some milk, tasting it to make sure it was not too sour; she then told one of the big girls to put the clotted milk in a calabash and to shake it up vigorously so as to break up the clots very small. It was very difficult to make the infant drink this sour milk because it spat it out in disgust. The mother, therefore, placed the baby on her lap and poured a little of this clotted milk into the palm of her hand; she then put the edge of her palm to the

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“Ah, but I puzzle you,” said another man, “with a goat-ram that grazes with white goats ; they move about much, and yet they eat in one place.” The people all declared that there wasn’t such a thing, and that there couldn’t be such a thing. But

the man who asked the riddle answered, "Ah my friends, you see I have puzzled you with this goat-ram of mine. Would you like to know what it is? I will tell you; it is the tongue and the teeth." The people all laughed, and said that was indeed a clever riddle; but one of the old men said, "Oh, I can tell you a better one than that. Guess ye a man who makes himself a chief. He refuses to do any work, and simply sits still in the kraal, and looks down on the ground, He makes all the people work for him, but will do no work himself. He takes his people by the hand and leads them to where there is food, and they have to carry it back to their homes, while he will not lend a hand. At first the people disputed his authority, and said, 'You cannot be a king if you sit still and do nothing; as for us, we cannot see in what your kingship consists; we cannot see the power of your majesty.' But he merely replied, 'Since you say I am not a chief, I will just sit still and do nothing; I will merely look on the ground. Then you will all fall into pits and over precipices and your land will be desolate; and you will be eaten by wild beasts and die, because you will not be able to find food.' Then the people owned that he was a chief, for they said, 'If we die of famine, then the majesty

This riddle puzzled the people even more than the previous ones, and they made the wildest guesses. One person thought it might be one thing and another person thought it might be another; and much to everybody's amusement Bombo was heard to say, "I wish I was that chief who hadn't to work or wash, but who was given such a lot of nice food." When all the people had given up guessing, the old man said that the answer to the riddle was "The eye." When they heard this answer they said it was very good, though the children did not understand the point.

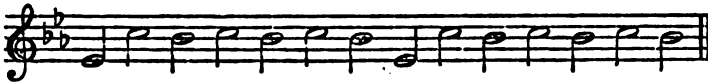
CHAPTER XVII

THE HEALING OF SKIN-SORE: THE FAIRY TALE FOR THE FIFTH NIGHT

AFTER supper the baby was put to sleep. First of all the mother sang the special kraal-chant, weaving the baby's name into it and using all sorts of coaxing baby-language; she then sang the praise-song of the child's grandfather, substituting the baby's name, and adding the word *tula*, which means "hush" or "be quiet." When she had sung this several times she invented a lullaby, crooning any nonsense that came into her head: "Hush my child, thy mother has not hoed her garden, for there were great big stones between the weeds, and the stones hindered her; thy mother has not hoed her garden." She then sang endless rubbish about fetching wood and water, about cooking, about threshing the corn and about brewing the beer. When the infant was beginning to doze she sang her lullaby.

Woye, woye,
I am going down South
To Mwandiemudza,
Tshibuwe's daughter
Who has white eyes
Like a weasel's,
The cunning weasel,
You see its whiskers
Are fine and large,
They need a doctor.

REFRAIN OF LULLABY.



“But I want to know,” shouted Mahleka, thoroughly awakening the baby, “why the weasel’s whiskers needed a doctor. Ma-a-a-ame ! I want to know.”

"I suppose," said the mother, "that Tshibuwe

“ Oh, I see,” said the Bull ; “ won’t you ask the doctor to give me some medicine Mame, or my whiskers might turn white, and then I should become an old man.”

“But, Grandmother,” said Mahleka, “Skin-sore was healed some nights ago, and how can he be healed twice?”

“ Ah, but he has been unhealed since then,” said Phiri ; “ I heard a diviner say, a few days ago, that

he could undo all the good people had got from medicines. Somebody, evidently, had unhealed him by magical practices."

No one ventured to doubt Phiri's word, for after the Evening Party he was to be taken away by the great diviner so that he might be trained to become a doctor. The grandmother took Mahleka on her lap and stroked his skin while she told how Skin-sore's body was freed from all its sores and was made nice and smooth.

HOW SKIN-SORE WAS HEALED

ONCE upon a time there was a man who had been carried off by a large hawk, which placed him in its nest on a tree growing in the middle of a pond. All the man's children and relations went to the pond in order that they might rescue him from the nest of the great bird. But they failed in their endeavours because the pool was so deep.

At last the man's little daughter, Ruwo, determined she would try to rescue her father. You must know that when Ruwo was a little girl her father had said that, unlike all her other sisters, she might marry whatever man she liked. Ruwo said to all the men who had failed to rescue her father,

“The pool is too deep,” they said ; “ had it only been shallow ! And the tree is too high for us ; and the pond gives us the creeps.”

Said the others, "Go in then; as for us we cannot manage it."

"Let us both go in," he said.

“Let us compose a magic song,” said Skin-Sore.

"Well," said the maiden, "compose it then."

“Come, all of you sing our song ; if we die, we die ; shall our father die in the tree without our attempting his rescue ? ”

In the meantime the father, in the nest there, no longer eats porridge; he lives on the game carried by the hawk and placed in the nest, eating his food raw.

"Suppose I stopped eating," said he, "should I manage to survive the pangs of starvation?"

"Answer all of you to my song," said the girl, "that we may get in there."

"Sing and let us hear," replied the people, "and we will answer."

Then sang the girl :



Tshengerera, tshengerera, Nandi expelling
 Tshengerera, tshengerera, Expel the Tshembare,
 Tshengerera, tshengerera, Depart O snake,
 Tshengerera, tshengerera, Depart O python,
 Tshengerera, tshengerera, Depart O hippopotamus.

Having sung this magical song, the girl took her staff, and lo! the snake fled, the hippopotamus fled from that pool, the crocodiles fled from that pool, the very waters of the pool fled and retreated far off, leaving the old man open to approach.

"Ah," said Ruwo, "please climb, Skin-Sore ; I don't know how to climb up a tree as I am a woman ; please *you* climb."

"All right," replied Skin-Sore, "I'll climb."

So up he climbed and took hold of the father of

“How shall I manage to descend with your father all by myself?” said Skin-Sore.

So she drove it off, and it fled ; everything fled, snakes and crocodiles and hippopotamuses ; they all fled.

So up climbed the girl, and between them they brought her father to the ground, helping one another until they got him down to the bottom.

“ Oh, all right,” said Skin-sore.

“Yes,” said the girl, “’tis he who marries me, because he kindly came to my help to save my father.”

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she said to Skin-sore, "Please get into the pot that has the medicines in it."

"But shall I not get burnt?" said Skin-sore.

"Supposing you do get burnt," said his little wife, "the sores will disappear."

"Will they, indeed, disappear by my getting burnt?"

"Yes, they will just disappear; and you won't get burnt because I have put my medicines in it."

"Very well," said Skin-sore, "I will get into the pot; if you kill me, you kill me, though remember it was I who out of the kindness of my heart brought your father down from the tree."

"What!" said the girl, "should I kill the man who rescued my father? And should I want to kill the man who married me? Were there no other people for me to choose as my husband?"

So Skin-sore got into the pot, while the girl piled up a great stack of firewood round it. Ah! The pot begins to simmer. After a short while she draws it off the fire, and holding the pot by the mouth says: "Come out."

"I can't come out of myself," said Skin-sore; "please help me out; take hold of me."

So the girl took hold of him and drew him out.

Lo ! The skin-sores were all drawn out too ; they disappeared !

“Now, don't you see ?” said the girl. “And yet you wanted to refuse to do what I said !”

“Did I know,” answered Skin-sore, “that my sores would all fall from me and leave me a beautiful black skin like this ?”

“And now,” said the old Chief, when the fairy tale was finished, “as to-morrow is the day for the Party, you must all go to bed at once, for you won't get much sleep to-morrow night.”

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THE EVENING PARTY: IN THE HUTS

It will be remembered that, several days previously, the Chief had decided to hold an Evening Party. He considered carefully which kraals should be invited, for there were old feuds between certain families, and he knew that if the boys and girls from these rival kraals were to meet, quarrelling would be sure to follow, and that there would be bruised limbs and possibly broken heads by the time the party broke up. Since invitations had to be sent out by word of mouth, early the following morning, several of his sons, who were about sixteen years old, visited the cattle-herds of the kraals to be invited, and said rather formally, "We are going to have an Evening Party at the Great Place in a few days' time and want to know whether the boys of your kraal will come and play with us?"

"We shall be very glad indeed to come," replied the head boy of the kraal invited, "but on what day is the Party to be held and at what time shall we arrive?"

After mentioning the date, the others replied: "Oh, come when you have finished milking the cows in the evening."

"We shall be very glad to come."

It was understood that the invitation was addressed to all the boys of the kraal, for no one expected a separate invitation.

In the same fashion, when the girls went to fetch water and wood for the day, they got into conversation with the girls of the kraal to be invited. When they had filled their water-pots at the river, they sat down to chat, and the chief girl, mentioning the date of the Party, said, "We invite you all to a Party to be held at our Kraal."

"We shall all be delighted to come," answered the girls, "but tell us at what hour you will expect us?"

"Come at the time of the cooking of the evening meal."

As it takes a good many days to prepare paint, bead-work, bangles, and other ornaments for great occasions, the invited guests can tell by the number

of days allowed for preparation how great an entertainment to expect and how to dress up. On very special occasions over a hundred children may be present and so every one does his very best to look as smart as possible.

On the morning of the Party the boys were busy catching mice, rats, and birds, so as to add to the variety of the food ; while the girls brought out small grinding-stones (very much like those used by grown-up women for grinding corn), and breaking up some soft stone into small pieces, ground it into a fine powder, which was mixed with water or fat and then smeared over the body. Some of the girls used rouge, though most of the boys decorated themselves all over with white paint.

The bigger girls made extremely nice bead-work as well as numerous ornaments of grass, or of brass or copper wire, for placing round the wrist, elbow, ankle, calf, knee, and waist. Blankets were very prettily ornamented with coloured beads, and the skins of wild animals were worked up with grease until soft and supple. Most of the children tattooed themselves with pointed sticks, thus making in the skin whitish marks which were only intended to last a few days. Nokofa, however, had, a few days previously, made some circular burns on her arms

by placing a glowing ember near her skin. As the sores healed they left permanent round patches of smooth light-coloured skin, which black people think very pretty.

After the mid-day meal the children had a special coating of grease given to their bodies so as to make them look smart and clean. As the afternoon wore on, the anxious mothers were busy telling the boys to be sure not to squabble during the party lest it should be said that they came from a quarrelsome kraal, and so the whole family should be publicly disgraced. They especially lectured them not to eat too much, telling them that if they were greedy, the people would all say, "See, those children come from a kraal where there is famine." Finally, the parents impressed on the boys that they were not to annoy the girls; and, above all, were not to forget to be very polite to the Chief, who was giving the Party. But all these instructions fell on deaf ears.

The children in many a kraal were very impatient as their mothers put the last touches to their toilets, which consisted chiefly of bead-work and grease. As the sun set, there could be seen issuing from many a hut a string of boys and girls anxious to hurry off to the Great Place.

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On arriving at the kraal all the guests saluted the Chief. They walked up to him in single file, stood still for a while as they shuffled their feet, and pointed to the sky with the right hand as they said, "Bayete!" Then they saluted the head-men who were present, addressing them by the name "Nduna." All the oldish men were greeted with the word "Baba." Black people think it very important to greet people courteously, for it not only shows respect and honour, but is also an excellent way for a person to attract attention to himself; it is as if he said, "Take notice, all ye people! It is I who have arrived at this kraal. Look at me!" A black man loves to draw attention to himself, and thinks that a person cannot start too early in life in obtaining notice.

After saluting the Chief and the head-men, the guests shook hands with all the grandmothers present, not a little kissing being indulged in between the women and the small children. The salutations over, the guests were told which huts were set apart for the evening, and then filed off into a hut which served as cloak-room, and where they piled their blankets on several leather thongs which were stretched between the poles that supported the roof.

As the various groups disposed of their wraps the Bull of the Kraal was bustling all over the place, trying to look immensely important. He had forgotten about the Heavenly Maidens, for he was full of a secret which he was bursting to tell to somebody ; so he ran up to every group of guests in turn, picked out the biggest boy, and said to him, in his usual loud whisper, and with an air as if he were telling a very secret mystery : “ I say ; do you know ? don't tell any one, will you, but we've got fifty mice being cooked with their skins on, and we've got twenty birds that are to be eaten on the hill in the dark when it is quite late, and they have got all their feathers, and heads, and tails on ; they'll be ever so nice ; and there's a sheep being boiled whole ; but you won't tell any one, will you ? It's a secret.” This pantomime was acted over again to every fresh batch of guests ; but all the big boys were in a good humour, and so patronised the Bull of the Kraal in a very fatherly fashion.

Since the party was to last till dawn, any child who got tired was allowed to go to one of the huts and have a sleep whenever it liked ; when refreshed it could return to the party. When the entertainment does not last all night, the guests sleep at the kraal of the person inviting them. The first great

There were no "tea-things," but the girls had made a number of small toy clay plates and dishes which they had dried in the sun and then baked in the fire. These were all arranged on the floor, for of course there were no tables or chairs.

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they produced with a great sense of pride. The small guests got themselves into a dreadful mess during meal-time, smearing their faces and bodies with the food ; so the dogs had a glorious time in licking a number of them clean.

No sooner was the food eaten than the children called out for a game. They began to play at "horses," while some of the bigger boys covered themselves with blankets or skins, and crawled round the dark hut on their hands and knees, shouting "woooo, wooooo," at the top of their voices in imitation of wolves, much to the terror of the small children. One big boy pretended he was a lion, and began to chase Mahleka, whose experience with the lioness was so recent that he ran off to his grandmother for protection. Then all the guests began to romp, some of them playing at "waggon," dragging one another about the floor on old ox-hides and so raising a terrible dust, while others began to play with the bull-roarer. This consists of a small piece of wood tied on to the end of a piece of string, which is itself fixed to a short wooden handle ; as the piece of wood is whirled round in the air, it makes a noise like a wild animal roaring. As a rule the women tell the boys not to play with it, because they think

that the noise attracts the wind. If their supposition were correct, there certainly should have been a furious gale that night.

After the guests had been romping for about half an hour, and were all in a state of tremendous perspiration, they sat down and began to discuss the next game. A small boy about twelve years old seized an old coat his father had brought back from the Diamond Fields at Kimberley, took a stick, and marshalled five or six small boys who had lost their first teeth. He said, "I am a schoolmaster," and at once began to teach the small boys their A, B, C. These three letters are known in almost every kraal in the country, even in districts where white men are rarely seen. So the little schoolmaster said to the row of boys, "Now then, sirs, say A, B, C!"

The first tiny boy began, "A, B, Thee."

"Wrong," said the teacher, "hold out your hand for a beating; it is not Thee but C."

The child, who had no front teeth, said, "But I didn't thay Thee, I thaid *Theeeee*."

"Exactly," said the excited teacher; "so hold out your hand and be beaten."

Amid roars of laughter, the schoolmaster pulled up his coat-sleeves, which were a foot too long,

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hitched up the old pair of trousers whose legs had been doubled up half a yard, and having thrashed the first child, said to the second boy, "Now, sir ! say A, B, C."

The little fellow wriggled on his feet with confusion, and said, "But I can't thay it ; I really can't thay it."

"Oh, you can't 'thay' it, can't you ? Well, I'll teach you to 'thay' it. Now, sir, say A, B, C."

The child thought that he might possibly pronounce the sound correctly if he said it very deliberately and with great emphasis ; so he called out, "A, B, *Ftheeee*."

"Wrong again," said the teacher ; "it is C, and not *Ftheeee*."

"But I can't fthay *Fffhee* ; I've lost my teeth."

"Then hold out your hand, sir, and I'll teach you to loose your teeth," said the mischievous teacher. Amid roars of laughter, the small boy was beaten. Then the teacher pretended to get very angry, and made the third boy say his A, B, C, enjoying what he thought a tremendously good joke. The entire audience, men, women, and children, roared with merriment and called out, "Again, again." So all the victims had to say

All sorts of other games were played: Mealie-cobs were put up to represent soldiers or nine-pins, being arranged in two rows close together, between which two large tops of a very rough and wobbly description were set spinning. As these tops in their erratic course knocked over the soldiers, the fate of the battle was decided.

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of the right row. Having done that successfully without touching the mealies during the passage, she bent over again and drew the second mealie of the left row across to her side, causing it to pass between the second and third mealie of the right row. She had done about ten successfully when, accidentally, she peeped through one of her half-closed eyes. Phiri, who watched Mosele as a cat watches a mouse, detected her at once, telling her she must begin again from the very beginning. Mcelu, the head-boy of the neighbouring kraal, alone succeeded in drawing all the mealies of the left row in correct order through the spaces in the right row, without touching the mealies in passing, and was given a free smoke of Indian Hemp as a prize.

After this game, the children began to play tricks with their bodies. One suddenly turned his upper eye-lids inside out, displaying the red membrane: at once twenty others did the same, and began to laugh at one another, and to make fun of their grotesque appearance. Then Hobohobo challenged Bombo to what must be called a Perspiration Match. The two boys knelt down on the floor and began to jerk their bodies about in a furious fashion

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until the perspiration began to roll in little streams from their bodies. They went on doing this amidst the screams of the onlookers, some of whom backed Bombo while others backed Hobohobo. There were shouts of "Go it, Good Old Nasal Bones!" "That's right, Old Lazy Snake!" "Well done, Hobohobo!" as the onlookers cheered the two rivals. Neither of the two boys meant to give in, and for about a quarter of an hour they jerked their bodies about in the most vigorous fashion. At last Bombo got out of breath and gave in. Hobohobo therefore was declared to be the victor, and looked as proud as a peacock.

Phiri then told the other boys that he challenged them to do the trick he would show them. He took a piece of grass string about two yards long and joined the two ends together to form a loop: he then placed this loop round his head and around his two hands which he held out in front of his face. A string circle was thus formed which touched the back of his head and the backs of his two hands. He then steadied the string by hitching it round his thumbs; and holding the string taut, he moved his left hand in front of his open mouth, passed the string between his teeth

and looped it under his chin. He then moved his left hand, still carrying the string, away to the left side. He then did the very same thing with the right hand, drawing the string finally away to the right side. When he had done this, he jerked the loop of string, which was in front of his face, over the back of his head, clapped his hands, and quickly separated them. To the amazement of the children who were looking on, the string was then seen to be entirely free from his mouth and chin and also free from his head. By this trick Phiri had undone the apparent tangle, and the entire loop of string was found to be free of knots, and stretched tight over the backs of his two hands. Everybody declared that this feat was done by witchcraft, for though they tried again and again to do the trick, they all failed.

While the big boys were trying to do Phiri's string trick, the smaller children played the following game. Mosele picked up a small piece of skin from the back of Nokofa's hand, pinching it between her finger and thumb; Nokofa then picked up a similar piece of skin on the back of the hand of Mahleka; a dozen others followed suit, and then all began to swing the chain of hands about while

they sang out, "Mantsipatsipane, Mantsipatsipane," to a tune very much like our "Oranges and Lemons." Suddenly, at a given signal, they all jerked their hands away, each one pinching the skin of the hand he was holding as firmly as possible. When playing this game some of them pulled out pieces of skin from one another's hands, but they never thought of crying on account of the pain.

When their hands were sore from playing Mantsipatsipane, Nofoka picked up a stone and hid both her hands behind her back, shuffling it at the same time. She then threw out her closed hands in front of her and asked Bombo to guess in which hand the stone was. At once all the guests were divided up into couples, playing this game with great rapidity. When any one guessed correctly in which hand the stone was, the other person sang out, "You eat the beef, I eat the dog," and with that handed the stone to the rival. When, however, he guessed wrongly the other cried out, "You eat the dog, I eat the beef," the dog being the one animal black people do not eat.

Since the Party was so big, it was impossible for the hundred and twenty guests who were present to play in one hut; so most of the very small ones

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had been gathered together by the women who carried them off into a hut specially reserved for them. So we must leave the bigger children playing their games and take a peep into the other hut and see what the smaller ones were doing.

CHAPTER XIX

THE EVENING PARTY : FAIRY TALES

LIKE their elders, after eating all they could, the tiny guests began to play about in a violent fashion, but they soon grew tired and began to beg for some fairy tales. Since there were many women present, a number of stories were demanded one after the other. The first was told by Mahleka's grandmother and caused great amusement, and this is the story she told.

THE MAN, THE LION AND THE MOUSE

Once upon a time a man, the owner of some dogs, said, "Let me go and look for my cane rats."

So he started looking for the rats, killing those he found. One day the rain said, "I shall fall!" So the man started running to a cave, and entering

therein sat down. As he did so, lo and behold ! a lion came out, only to re-enter and sit down also. Then in came a mouse, and sat down also.

Said the lion, " Oh man, give the dogs your rats, and then you eat the dogs, and then I will eat you."

Quoth the man, " Was there ever any one who ate a dog ? "

Said the lion, " Yes, forsooth, be willing to eat your dogs ; do not find fault with the word that I speak."

Said the mouse, " Yes, agree with what the lion says, namely, eat your dogs, and then you will be eaten by the lion, and I will, in my turn, eat the lion."

Said the lion, " Yowe ! I don't agree to being eaten by a mouse, I that am so big, while the mouse is so small."

So the lion ran at the mouse, which ran off. The lion returned to the cave and so did the mouse.

Said the lion, " Give the dog your rats, oh man, and I will eat you in turn."

The man refused and kept silent.

Said the mouse, "Agree to what the lion says, and then I too will eat the lion."

Said the lion, "Yowe!" and chased the mouse far away. The mouse entered in amongst some roots of the trees, and the lion started digging him out, while the man stayed behind, and finally went off home. Upon the lion returning to the cave the man is no longer there; he has gone.

Says the lion, "It's the mouse that has rescued the man whom I wanted to eat."

The mouse, meantime, went on its way, and coming to where the man was, said, "'Tis I that have saved you; now you must cover the mountain completely with traps." This the man did, covering it from top to bottom. The mouse then kept looking there every day, eating the mice caught in the traps.

On looking one day he found no mouse caught, but on arriving at the trap furthest off he found a beetle inside.

Said the mouse, "Hi! beetle, you it is that has been clearing off my mice."

The beetle made answer, "I haven't been clearing off your mice."

"Where have my mice gone to then? You it

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is that I find here; what makes your stomach so full?"

"It's not full; it's only its natural shape," said the beetle indignantly.

"Well, then," said the mouse, "let's go to the diviner."

As they were on their way to the doctor the mouse said, "To what sort of doctor is it we are going?"

"The doctor of the path," said the beetle. "If you jump the path and die, you are caught; let us go."

Reaching the path, the beetle jumped clean across it. Then the mouse said, "Let me have a try too."

As he did so, *fititi!* the mouse fell down dead on the path; and to-day the mouse cannot leap the path. If he should try to do so, he dies.

THE CHILD IN THE DRUM

Once upon a time a man, having hollowed a drum out of a log of wood, went on a journey. Presently he reached a place where there was a child watching a field of millet. The man caught the boy and put him in his drum and walked off.

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Arriving at a kraal, the people said, "Oh, man, please play your drum."

"Very well," said the man.

So he started playing.

Bububu, drum please speak :	<i>Tete ndende.</i>
Bububu, drum please speak :	<i>Tete ndende.</i>
Bububu, drum please speak :	<i>Tete ndende.</i>
Tell me of thy mercy	<i>Tete ndende.</i>
I was watching the millet	<i>Tete ndende.</i>
When suddenly I am in the drum :	<i>Tete ndende.</i>
Bububu, drum please speak :	<i>Tete ndende.</i>

So the man played and played and played. Then the people cooked some porridge for him. They also gave him a fowl, part of which he ate, and part of which he gave to the child in the drum. Then, when he had finished eating, he continued his journey.

Arriving at another kraal, the people say, "Please play your drum, and we will give you a pot of beer."

"Very well," said the man. So he played, saying :

Bububu, drum please speak :	<i>Tete ndende.</i>
&c. &c.	&c.

When he had finished playing his drum the people gave him beer, some of which he drank and

**Bububu, drum please speak :
&c. &c.**

Tete ndende.
&c.

So he took the child and put him in the hut. Then he called the man, saying, "Come out again and play your drum once more."

But when the man tried to play his drum it gave no reply any more. So he said, "Ah! that is not my drum."

And the people answered, "Ah, let us kill him."

So the man popped into his drum and ran off,

“I will not bite you for being the one who set me free,” said the lion.

Off went the mhara with her children ; but as she was hopping away, the lion called out, " Mhara we, give me one of your children to assuage my hunger."

“I entreat you,” said the lion, “I want to assuage my hunger: I can no longer manage to walk so as to look for my food till I am strengthened by having your child inside me.”

The lion devoured it. Then the mhara went off, the lion stopping behind to finish his dainty tit-bit, which left an uncommonly nice taste in his mouth. So he called the gazelle again, saying, "We mhara, mhara, mhara, mhara, oo! stand still there for me to talk to you." So the gazelle stood still.

“Give me again one of your children,” said the lion, “I am still hungry, and I have no power to walk.”

"Uncle," said the gazelle, "will you finish off all my children?"

"Let me just have one little one to eat," said the lion, "then I won't eat any more."

So the gazelle gave him one, leaving only four alive.

"All right, you can go," said the lion.

So off she started, but again the lion called out, "Ye mhara, mhara, still stand there, E!"

Upon her standing still, the lion said, "Mhara we, give me again one child; do you think I am satisfied with only two of your little things? Don't you see I am a big person and need to eat something big? To eat anything small does not satisfy me."

So the gazelle gave him another of her children, which the lion ate.

Then she started off again, but once more he called, "mhara, mhara."

Upon her answering, he said, "Give me one more of your children, I have not been satisfied; my mouth is just aching for something more."

So she gave him one more child, leaving only her little one remaining. She started off with a run, when the lion called out, "Ye mhara, mhara we."

But the gazelle stood perfectly silent.

"If you don't speak," said the lion, "I will eat you and your child; stand still there, E!"

So she stood still.

Coming up, the lion said, "Give me that remaining child of yours."

"But, uncle," said the gazelle, "now that you are started, are you going to deprive me of all my children?"

"Give me just that child of yours," said the lion, "and then you can go free yourself."

So she gave the lion the child, and he devoured it, saying, "You can go."

So she went at a run.

"Ye mhara, mhara we," called the lion.

But there was a dead silence.

"Ye mhara, mhara we."

Again there was dead silence.

"If you persist in being silent, when I see you, I'll eat you," said the lion, "I can see you keeping close over there."

But the mhara did not see through the lion's devices and foolishly answered the lion.

"Stand still there," said the lion, coming up to the place where the gazelle lay hidden, "Ee, give

me a chance, mhara we ! just give me one front leg to eat, and then you can go."

"But if you take off one of my legs how shall I manage to walk?" said the gazelle.

"Oh, you can walk very well on three legs."

Then up came a hare, and said, "What are you two squabbling about?"

"We are squabbling," said the gazelle, "because uncle here has eaten up all my children after I had set him free from the rope that bound him; he has rewarded me by eating up all my family."

"What sort of rope was it that could hold uncle?" said the hare.

"It was a big one," said the gazelle.

"Let us see whether the lion could really be held," said the hare.

"All right," said the lion, "twist a rope and see whether I could be held or no."

So they made a rope and looked out for a big tree wherewith to make a trap.

"Come, set the trap," said the lion.

So they set the trap, and said, "Come along uncle, have a try and see whether you can be held."

They tied his leg then to the trap and let the pole carry him up in the air.*

"Come on mhara," said the hare, "let us run off."

So off they ran, while the lion said, "Certainly the hare was deceiving me all the time, was he? that I might remain a prisoner here."

"Yes," answered the hare, "I did so because you finished all the mhara's children."

So the lion remained there, while the gazelle and hare got away safely, leaving the lion to die of hunger.

The Bull of the Kraal had entered the hut while this story was being told, and when it was ended he said, "Grandmother, please do tell us another story about Skin-sore. There was one you told us last year when the crops were being gathered in. Don't you remember?"

She thought for a few moments, and asked him whether he meant the story of Skin-sore killing a cannibal.

"Yes, Grandmother, that's the story; do tell it us to-night."

* The pole was bent as a spring; on being released, it carried the lion up in the air in a noose attached to the pole.

"But how can I tell you that story when last night Skin-sore was healed of all his sores?"

"Oh, Grandmother, can't you unheal him again just for to-night, even as you unmarried him every night last week?"

"Well," said his grandmother, "seeing it is a party to-night, perhaps we might. But you must be very quiet and not interrupt me." She then told this story.

HOW SKIN-SORE KILLED A CANNIBAL

Once upon a time a man married a wife, by whom he had six children. When hunger began to bite he said, "Let us go to a place where there is food to eat."

So they started, and on reaching a river found it full.

"What shall we do?" said they; "the river is so full and is running so high."

"I will get you across," said the father.

So he ferried across four of the children, leaving two, a boy and a girl, the latter having a big swelling on her body and the former having a skin eruption.

"As for you," said the father, "I have no inten-

tion of putting you across the river ; I am tired. I shall not put across children who have swellings or skin sores."

So off they all went—husband, wife, and four children, leaving behind the two children, who at once started to follow the course of the river. Two dogs had been left with them, called Black and White. Happening to see some ants carrying grain, the boy said, "Let us follow the ants and see where they come from, and pick up grain on the way."

So doing they came to a cave full of grain.

"We are saved," said they.

"Grind us some grain and cook for us," said Skin-sore to the girl.

So she ground some grain and made porridge. They spent several days there, and during that time the boy planted a castor-oil tree, saying, "I am going away."

"Whither are you going?" said the girl.

"I am going to the heart of the country over there," said Skin-sore, "and if you see my castor-oil tree dying you may know that I am dead. Now I am going to take White with me, but will leave you Black."

So he went away with his dog, leaving the other with his sister.

Coming to where a buffalo was lying dead, the dog sniffed at it, but forbore to eat any; so the boy also forbore. Passing on, the dog drank some water, so the boy also drank. He spent ten days on the journey, and at length came to a kraal which had only women living in it.

"Where have you come from?" said they.

"From the heart of the bush over there," said the boy.

"There is an old woman in that hut there," said the women, "who eats people. She has finished off all the males."

The old woman happened to see the boy, and said, "Come into the hut, my grandson."

Then the old woman cooked him some porridge and vegetable; but the dog left the porridge, and only took the vegetable. So Skin-sore did the same.

"Why are you leaving the porridge, my grandson?" said the old woman.

"Oh, it's our custom at home," said the boy, "to eat the vegetable and leave the porridge."

So he ate the old woman's vegetable, but left

the porridge uneaten. In the afternoon he was called to a meal by the same old dame. This time the dog ate the porridge, but left the vegetable; so the boy did the same.

"But why do you eat the porridge all alone, and not eat the vegetable?"

"It is the custom at our kraal. Some days we eat our porridge without any relish," said Skin-sore.

"Then good-night," said the old woman.

So the boy lay down to sleep, the dog lying at his head. Then the old woman tried to steal up stealthily with a red-hot hearthstone, wishing to put it in the boy's ear. But the dog gave her a bite, and she called out, "Your dog is biting me, my grandson."

"Do not come near to the place where I am lying down, for you may be bitten," said the boy. "Lie down and sleep over yonder."

So they lay down again; but later on the old woman arose, and having put on water to boil, tried to put it in his ear as the boy lay asleep. But again the dog bit her, and so she gave up the attempt.

In the morning he left the hut, but the old woman remained behind and dug a pit close to the

So up walked the boy, with his dog in front of him; but as the dog entered by the window, he also entered that way.

"Yes," said the boy; "that's what we do at our kraal. Some days we enter by the window."

Skin-sore ate it as the dog did so; he ate the porridge and the vegetable—all that was there—and then went out, leaving the old woman alone. This time she started to dig a hole under the window, and in the afternoon she called the boy again; but as the dog was about to reach the doorway it turned back, and when it would go in by the window it turned back. So the boy said, "I do not want anything to-day."

"Yes, that's what I mean to do; it's what we do at our kraal."

“Well, my grandson,” said the woman, “please

go and cut me some firewood in the bush over there."

"All right, let us go," said the boy.

"But leave your dog behind," said the woman.

"I cannot leave my dog behind; I like to have him with me."

"No, leave him behind this time," said the woman.

So he left the dog behind, and they came to where there was a dried-up tree in the middle of a pond. The old woman asked him to climb up the tree and cut it down.

"But how shall I climb that tree and cut it down when it is in the centre of a pond?" said Skin-sore.

"Well, please climb up and cut," said the old woman.

So he climbed the tree and started cutting. Then the old woman called out, "To-day you die; you who are so cunning."

"But why should you kill me?" asked the boy.

"Ah, but I shall just kill you," replied the old woman.

Then Skin-sore began to call his dog. But the old woman said, "I shall cut you down with my big tooth," and commenced biting the tree. Just

as the tree was beginning to fall, up came the dog and bit the old woman ; whereupon the boy came down from the tree with his chopper and cut up that old woman all to pieces and killed her. Just then up flew her child, a bird called *Jirimapimbiro*.

"Why have you killed my mother?" said the bird.

"I killed her because she tried to eat me."

"Well, I shall eat you in revenge," said the bird.

The bird, as it was speaking, was perched on a stone. Now the bird was so big that had it tried to settle on a tree it would have broken it at once. And as the bird tried to eat the little man, up came the dog. The bird caught hold of the dog and would have killed it, but Skin-sore came with his chopper and cut the bird to pieces. Then he cut some firewood, and burnt the bird and the old woman to ashes.

On going back to the kraal the people said, "Where have you come from?"

"I have killed that old woman and her child," said he.

Whereupon they all saluted him as their chief with their shrill cries, saying, "You are our chief."

"But why should I be your chief?" said the boy.

"Because you have killed the one who was devouring us, who used to leave the girls alone, devouring only the men. On this account the men used to live in thickets, whither we took their food."

"Very well," said he, "then I am your chief as you say."

After staying there some time he told them, saying, "I have left my sister behind on the way; I want to send some one to fetch her."

"But how shall we know the way?" said they.

"Oh, the messenger will know it all right, for I shall send my dog with him; what the dog eats he must eat, and what the dog leaves alone he must leave alone; the path the dog takes he must take."

So the messenger started off with the dog, keeping it in front of him. On reaching the place where the buffalo had been killed, the dog sniffed and let the animal alone; on coming to where a bush-buck had died, the dog ate it, and so did the man. Where the dog rested at mid-day, the man rested too; where it drank water, he drank also, until at last it came to the place where the sister was. The dog wagged its tail on seeing her, whereupon she said, "My dog has come alone; where has my brother stayed?"

"No," answered the man, "your brother is a chief."

"But how can he be a chief, when he was once such a poor, forlorn fellow?"

"He is a chief because he killed that old woman who was there, and who was in the habit of eating all the males."

"I once saw," said the girl, "something by the castor-oil tree that had faded; but during these last ten days it has been flourishing again." *

"That is why I have been sent," said the man. "Let us go."

"Very well," said the girl.

So off they started, the two of them together, taking the two dogs with them. They spent ten days on the way, and the dogs had many puppies born to them during the journey. When the girl had reached the place where her brother was, she was welcomed by the boy, who said, "You have come, my sister."

"*Ndawwe*," answered the girl.

"I was on the point of being killed," said the boy, "by that old woman who was here; but now

* The girl divined the fortunes of her brother by means of the castor-oil tree that he had planted. This tree suffered in sympathy with the boy who had planted it.

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I have managed to kill her, and so the people said to me, 'You are our chief.' So go, my sister, to the husband to whom you are betrothed."

"Very good," said the girl.

So they two lived there, and Skin-sore became the chief of the elephants and helped in cutting them up.

As soon as the old grandmother had finished the story, the children heard a tremendous noise outside the hut, and at once all rushed out to see what game the others were playing. What it was, the next chapter will show.

CHAPTER XX

THE EVENING PARTY: UNDER THE STARS

THE big boys had been growing tired of the games they had been playing and so one of them shouted out, "Oh, let's play at Lovers." "Oh yes ; do let's," screamed out a dozen others, rushing off at once to hunt for their sweethearts. Phiri pounced upon Mosele and carried her off in triumph; Makiwane hunted for Nontando; Nokofa wondered wherever the Bull of the Kraal had gone and soon found out that he was in what she called the "Babies' Hut," whither she went to seek him in the most unblushing fashion; Bombo, of course, was the last of the whole crowd to find his sweetheart. The excited couples ran off into the open air, and the boys set to work to build small huts, making wicker-work frames over which they threw their blankets—thus forming flimsy little huts barely big enough to shelter two people. They lit small fires and made the girls cook for them, for everything

had to be done as in real life. Even the smallest boys, who did not in the least understand what a sweetheart was, ran up to a big brother or sister—in their case it did not in the least matter which—and begged them to act as sweethearts for the evening. The game of Lovers lasted for quite an hour, and would have been continued longer had not some of the grown-up people suggested that it was time to start dancing.

By general request the first dance was a very brisk one. Fifty or sixty boys stood in a row in the open air while as many girls faced them at some little distance, two men holding torches made of reeds dipped in boiling fat. The dance began with a low, dull chant, the children keeping time by stamping the ground with their feet. Every now and then the two rows of dancers drew together, though the boys and girls never touched one another. At a certain period in the chant every dancer lifted the right leg and left arm, bending the body into a very awkward shape: the legs were all held up in the air for a few moments while the dancers continued humming their tune; then suddenly, at a change in the rhythm, the feet were thumped down on the ground with a great thud. The music grew louder and faster, and the attitudes of the

dancers grew more grotesque, presenting a weird sight in the lurid and flickering light of the torches. As the dance grew wilder every one sang out, "Seweliwelele, Seweliwelele"; and at the sound of these words the contortions of the swaying and stamping bodies grew most ridiculous, while each dancer revolved round and round on his own small patch of ground. The singing increased to a furious rate, as everybody kept on shouting out, "Seweliwelele, Seweliwelele," till a wild frenzy of excitement seized the dancers, who stamped, and jumped, and swung their bodies about in the most absurd fashion, every one trying to see who could be most fantastic. The grimaces that they made as they shouted in their excitement were most comical, while the admiring crowd of onlookers, old and young, applauded their special favourites, and egged them on to wilder attempts. The dance, however, collapsed abruptly in a perfect torrent of noise; then the dancers and the audience chatted together about the fun they had been having. Hobohobo, who thought he had been doing wonders before the eyes of a girl whose love he wished to win, went up to her jauntily and asked her whether he were not the most agile and graceful of all the dancers; but the damsel had set her heart upon

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It is on occasions such as this, when everything is in confusion in the kraal, that the boys pay out any grudges they owe to cantankerous women. We have seen already that amongst black people aunts count for very little, and that they very rarely interfere with their nephews and nieces. There are exceptions to every rule, and there was one aunt who had recently been scolding the boys

for letting the cattle graze close to her gardens. When everything in the kraal was in a state of turmoil Makiwane seized the sleeping cat belonging to this cantankerous aunt, and carried it off in the darkness.

There was great amusement when the boys saw Makiwane kill the animal, which was cooked with all its fur on ; but it was very difficult for them to suppress their laughter next morning when this unpopular aunt said, "I can't for the life of me think what has happened to my cat ; it seems to have vanished during the night. Have any of you boys seen it ?" Makiwane, who was feeling uncomfortably conscious that he had eaten too much cat, pretended to be most interested in the welfare of the aunt's pet animal, and offered, with most unusual courtesy—at least so the aunt thought—to go at once and hunt for it in the bush. Truly black boys know how to pay out people who make themselves objectionable.

The boys on the top of the hill fixed a pointed stick in the ground and impaled on it the cooked heart of the sheep. The biggest lad, whose hands were tied behind his back, tried to bite a mouthful out of the heart, and as he was doing this all the small boys were allowed to attack him with sticks.

One by one each boy came up and was allowed to take a bite in turn. There was naturally very little left for the small ones, but lest the parents should think that the big lads had been too greedy, the head-boy smeared the faces of the little ones with the half-cooked blood. Thus the phrase, "You smear me with blood," comes to mean, "You accuse me falsely."

The boys produced from their bags (which do duty for pockets) the most marvellous things. It is to be doubted whether the pocket of an English schoolboy could contain such variety as did Phiri's. Here is a list of things that it contained; Several pieces of string made from grass, one dead mouse, five old pieces of food, six bangles, the wings of two birds, several needles for sewing frayed skins, a wooden spoon, a snuff-box, some edible roots, some Indian hemp and a small horn to smoke it with, a tobacco pipe made from the roots of a tree, a piece of hoop-iron, two fire sticks, three caterpillars, and finally, a lizard. The most weird confusion of such articles was turned out on the hill-top beneath the silent stars, and everything that could be eaten was cooked over the fire.

When the mutton had vanished—all except the skin, which was pegged out on the ground to dry,

and the bones which had been gnawed clean, broken, and robbed of their marrow, before they were given to the dogs—the boys waxed quarrelsome and “coxy;” it needed but a few whiffs of the intoxicating smoke of Indian hemp to bring matters to a crisis. A game of soldiers was suggested, and one group of kraals challenged another group to a fight. On the side belonging to the Bull of the Kraal there were but twenty boys, while on the other side there were fully thirty. To prevent confusion in the dark, all those fighting for the chief’s kraal smeared themselves with fresh white paint, since they had no coloured jerseys to put on. The singing of the war-chant in play is strictly forbidden, for it is used when men are about to die; but as there were no men looking on, all the boys drew up in two opposed lines and began to sing the war-dance, chanting the war-song slowly and solemnly in subdued voices. The excitement grew as the forbidden song increased in volume and rapidity; before long the tune became boisterous and noisy, and, when the excitement got beyond control, the two sides began to fight in real earnest. Every boy carried two sticks and fought as if he were fighting for his life. All pretence was thrown to the winds, and many were

the bruises received and many the scalps cut open. At first the "army" belonging to the chief's kraal got the worst of the fight owing to the superior numbers of the enemy, but in time the superior discipline and sense of honour, that had been cultivated under the eye of the chief, began to tell. Then slowly some of the least brave boys who were opposed to the chief's kraal grew timid, and five or six of the smaller ones withdrew slowly from the fight. Immensely encouraged by this, the "soldiers" representing the chief's kraal grew over confident and failed to back one another up properly. Hobohobo, consequently, found himself faced by two of the biggest boys of the other side and then his courage failed him. He turned tail and ran away from the fight amidst the jeers of both sides. But this set-back was only temporary; for little by little the "army" of the chief's kraal drove the others back, breaking their sticks and disarming them. When the boys of the chief's kraal were finally declared victors, a very characteristic thing happened. The rival parties at once dropped their temporary enmity and began to chase Hobohobo, who after some time was caught and brought back to the top of the hill. If there is one thing black boys despise it is a coward:

they say also that a boy who cowardly runs away from a fight is certain to find his arm growing short. It was therefore necessary, even in the boy's interest, to cure this evil; and since there was only one kind of remedy known to them, they proceeded to cure Hobohobo of his cowardice. One of the boys dug a hole in the ground, while several others took hold of Hobohobo, and, throwing him on the ground, placed his outstretched arm right into the hole—which was just as deep as his arm was long. Then two other boys put earth into the hole and stamped it well round the arm until the limb was buried up to the shoulder and tightly fixed. They then left Hobohobo there to pull himself out if he could. Black boys will often leave a coward in such a position all day, under the belief that it is not only a good punishment but also a certain remedy for preventing the arm from shrinking. In that position we must leave Hobohobo, who had to spend the rest of the night in that uncomfortable attitude, tugging away vainly in his attempt to get free, while tantalised by seeing all the others playing close by him.

As soon as Hobohobo was punished, wounds were patched up with a thick coating of mud, and when some awkward questions were asked next

morning in many a kraal, the boys accounted for the suspicious looking wounds, cuts, bruises, and other marks by saying that they fell down hill in the dark, or tumbled while playing games—all scorning to “sneak” about their injuries.

. Later on in the night the boys fixed up some swings on the hill-top, some suitable trees being selected for the purpose. Then dancing was indulged in for a considerable time, games and contests of skill being held when the dances were finished. There was a good deal of betting over the games, and many a goat changed hands through bets lost and won. There was a dispute about one of the bets, for it was said that a boy had cheated. A court was held at once, and the Bull of the Kraal was made to act as judge. In every detail they imitated the courts held by the grown-up people, for they appointed boys to plead on each side: it is almost always the popular boy who is acquitted, and the unpopular one who is found guilty, and it may be said with not a little truth that in this the children are like their betters. When a boy is found guilty, he is often tied to a post while another boy is ordered to thrash him, but Mahleka decided, prompted by his friend Makiwane, that the culprit should be ordered to

fag after the cattle all the next day. Makiwane thus got a fag who had to fetch him plenty of food while he lay on the ground enjoying himself in the shade, the fag having to look on without being allowed to have any food to eat. If it had been winter the boy would have been made to go long distances to fetch wood, to make fires at which the others would have warmed themselves, while the victim would have had to shiver far off from the fire in the cold.

When Mahleka had given his decision, the two armies—now at peace—sat round a nice big camp fire—made of huge logs of wood, which sent showers of sparks up into the dark sky—and told stories, every one bragging about his own bravery. Mahleka was asked to tell again the story of the lion as well as his adventure with the crocodiles and the hippopotamus; and it was not surprising to find that these two stories had grown in a few days; the lioness and two cubs had already grown into three fierce lions.

While the boys had been enjoying their midnight orgy on the hill, the girls had been occupied in a quieter fashion. They first began by making dolls, and then went on to gossip about their sweethearts, and finally played some of the games

When the lads on the hill-top noticed that the dawn was at hand, they broke up their gathering. In a most uproarious fashion they swept down the hill and raced back to the huts. As soon as these excited boys rushed into the kraal like a hurricane it was felt on all hands that it was time for the party to break up.

Blankets were fetched out, and the tired guests went to say good-bye to the chief, and to shake hands with the women. There emerged from the hut a number of tired children who crawled on hands and knees into the fresh morning air. There were many last words between the parting guests, as they slowly filed off in straggling rows along their various pathways to their different homes; they walked with wavering, unsteady footsteps, for most of them were tired, and all of them were grumbling and cross. As they reached their homes, everything looked dreary in the false light of dawn; the old people were cross at being roused

too early from their slumbers, and resented the barking of the dogs and the jabbering of the boys and girls; there arose a confused noise from the shouting of angry orders to children and dogs; the cocks and hens, disturbed from their roosts, were flying about the hut; the small children were crying or simpering, and the bigger ones were in a querulous mood. Everybody voted parties a nuisance; the girls wished they were boys so that they might have a midnight feast on the hill; the boys were aching in limb and bruised in body; the parents were suffering from the irritability that comes from a broken sleep. (Yet with wonderful wisdom everybody would look forward to the next party with delight, not one of them remembering their early morning discontent.) It was hard to believe that these grumbling, weary, bedraggled boys and girls were the very children who, eager and excited, started off for the party but twelve hours previously with such gaiety and joy.

When all the visitors had left, the Bull of the Kraal lay in the lap of his grandmother. It was all he could do to keep himself awake even though he was anxious to ask some questions about the Heavenly Maidens. As he rubbed his tired eyes with his knuckles, I heard him call out in a very

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When I crept out of the hut into the open air I found that Phiri was surrounded by many of his friends, for Mosele, Bombo, Nokofa, Makiwane, Tiye, and a few others, had remained behind so as to see him off.

**"Are you really going?" asked a dozen voices.
"Do come again and spend a longer time with us."**

“And what presents shall I bring with me when I come next?”

"Bring me some of that nice sugar-candy you gave us the other day," said Bombo, with unusual briskness.

"And some white fairies," said Nokofa.

"I would like a cunning box of music," added Phiri, to whom I had, a few days before, described a musical-box.

"And what would you like, Mosele?" said I.

"I think I would like a white baby," said Mosele, half under her breath.

"But what shall I bring Mahleka?"

Nokofa answered, "I am sure he would like you to bring him a little White Prince to play with; that is to say, if you can't catch a Heavenly Maiden."

At this moment the chief's big son, who had met me on my arrival, brought up my Basuto pony all saddled and ready for my journey; but before I mounted I went back to the hut to take a final look at the Bull of the Kraal whose roaring had greeted me a week previously. This time I found him quiet, for he was sleeping peacefully in his grandmother's arms, though probably he was dreaming of Heavenly Maidens, or cannibals, or hippopotamuses, or lions, or crocodiles. So I left him in the happy Land of Nod hunting for, and yet

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(to quote the words of a boy I knew in England)
“almost not quite nearly” catching, Heavenly
Maidens. As I rode off to the railway station,
which was five hundred miles away from the chief's
kraal, I heard, floating to me on the fresh morning
air, cries of, “Good-bye, white man ; come again
soon. . . . Good-bye.”

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